

Wednesday Bible Studies 2020

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The Bible is unlike any other book because the very words were breathed (inspired) by God and they still contain God’s breath (His life) and they are our spiritual food: *God has breathed life into all of Scripture. It is useful for teaching us what is true. It is useful for correcting our mistakes. It is useful for making our lives whole again. It is useful for training us to do what is right. By using Scripture, the servant of God can be completely prepared to do every good thing.*^{2Tim.3:16} *Life is spiritual. Your physical existence doesn't contribute to that life. The words that I have spoken to you are spiritual. They are life.*^{Jn.6:63} Jesus answered, *‘It is written: Man doesn't live only on bread. He also lives on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’*^{Matt.4:4}

But remember the difference between **exegesis** and **eisogesis**. Exegesis is the process of getting "out" ('ex') of the text what is truly there in the first place. The opposite to **exegesis** is **eisegesis** which is the process of putting "into" the text something that wasn't intended by the author and is almost a "blank cheque" for you to make the Bible say whatever you want!

To do **exegesis**, the correct principles of Bible interpretation (hermeneutics) need to be understood. **The first principle is context.** Always read the entire passage/chapter/book before preaching from a single verse. **The second principle is consistency.** Never interpret a text so that your interpretation contradicts the overall message of Scripture.

Base your answers on clear New Testament teaching (it’s alright to use OT references to illustrate NT doctrine, but don’t base your doctrine only on OT verses). Don’t be afraid of using other references studies besides the Bible—even Paul did that: *When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.*^{2Tim.4:13} But just be careful that you don’t get side-tracked from the main purpose of the Bible—which is to explain God’s plan of salvation to mankind through Jesus Christ, His Son and our Saviour!

30/12/2020

Credibility

We are determined to come through this pandemic as swiftly and sanely as possible by being smart and keeping safe—but most of all, by being blessed and being a blessing. *Make the Master proud of you by being good citizens. Respect the authorities, whatever their level; they are God's emissaries for keeping order. It is God's will that by doing good, you might cure the ignorance of the fools who think you're a danger to society. Exercise your freedom by serving God, not by breaking the rules. Treat everyone you meet with dignity. Love your spiritual family. Revere God. Respect the government.*^{1Pet.2:13-17}

Stay in fellowship with God, His Word and His people

What do you have to do to become better at discerning?

Do you have to read every book on the NY Times bestseller list to be able to make an informed opinion about the pseudo-Christian theology promoted by Eckhart Tolle or William Young? Do you have to read Richard Dawkins' books on mystical atheism to know that his assertions are not arguments and that they are irrational, contradictory and often mere speculation?

1. Good discerners look for the “big idea” first. Eckhart Tolle's big idea is pantheism (everything is God). Although he refers to Jesus, it is not the same Jesus as the New Testament extols. The apostle Paul warned his original audience that people had already begun to do this in the first century: *For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.*^{2Cor.11:4}

2. Good discerners know the difference between an assertion (an unsupported claim which is often just an opinion) **and an argument** (a claim supported by reasons). Often times false teachers promote their ideas without any real arguments. It takes discernment to recognise that someone's arguments are without substance.

3. Good discerners understand Falsifiability. A good argument is provable or disprovable. When someone presents an argument a good discerner knows how to evaluate that argument to determine whether it is true or false. Like the Bereans of Acts 17, they will investigate the claims to ascertain whether they are factual. For example, some false-prosperity teachers claim that when Jesus said it is easier for “*a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of heaven*” He wasn't stating that the pursuit of riches and the pursuit of God were incompatible, rather He was, they claim, referring to a small gate used by late night travellers to Jerusalem when the main gates of the city were closed. **Good discerners investigate such false claims and dismiss ridiculous myths like these.**

Without good discernment within the Church, more people will be taken advantage of and even abused. Improving our ability to discern will help to guard our credibility from things that have the potential to make us look or sound stupid. May God help us to be more discerning. God knows we need it now more than ever. Amen.

16/12/2020

Questions

What does Christmas celebrate?

Do you believe God came to Earth at Christmas?

What is the Holy Spirit to you?

Who is Jesus and how is He part of the Trinity?

How do your beliefs make a difference in your life and to your life in your church?

What do you do because of your beliefs?

Comments

What does Christmas celebrate?

Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ.

Do you believe God came to Earth at Christmas?

Yes! Although Jesus is God (and therefore he has existed for ever), about 2000 years ago he became human as Mary's baby. No one knows Jesus' actual birthday, but Christmas has become his "*Official Birthday*"—much like the Queen has an "Official Birthday" (the Saturday between 11 – 17 June) as well as her actual birthday (21st April)

Although today Christmas is celebrated on December 25 in the west and on January 7 in the east (they still use the Julian Calendar), we suggest that the evidence of astronomy, the bible and other ancient literature points to the Spring of 5 BC as being the time of the first Christmas. (*The Star of Bethlehem, Colin Humphreys*)

What is the Holy Spirit to you?

The Holy Spirit is the Person of the Godhead who resides in every true Christians to enliven their conscience as well as to inspire, empower and encourage them. So for me, the Holy Spirit is the Person of the Godhead who helps me in my daily life.

Who is Jesus and how is He part of the Trinity?

Jesus has always existed and was known as "the Word of God", but when he became human, he was given the name Jesus (which means "saviour"). He was with God in the beginning and was God—along with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. We call this the "*Trinity*," which literally means *tri-unity* (three-in-one)—One God in Three Persons. God is a title, like "queen" is a title and there are three Persons who make up the one God. Jesus grew up as an ordinary boy, but when he began to preach and heal people, some realised that he was different. What really proved Jesus' deity (that he was God), was that he came back to life three days after he died and then forty days later, his friends saw him go into heaven. Only God could come back to life and then return to heaven.

How do your beliefs make a difference in your life and to your life in your church?

My beliefs affect everything that I do as a person and everything we do as a church, because I am very aware that I am accountable to God. This means I want to live my life—and help other people live their lives—as God wants us to live.

What do you do because of your beliefs?

Because of my beliefs, I am careful to respect God in the way I live my life. This also makes me very fulfilled because I know that God wants me to live like this. As the Westminster Catechism says, "Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully enjoy him forever."

09/12/2020

The Joy of Christian Fellowship

Questions

What is God's plan of Redemption?

What is "fellowship"?

What role does the Holy Spirit have in our redeemed life (our life after we have been born-again)?

What is the Fruit of the Spirit? *Gal.5:22-23*

Is there a difference between joy and gladness?

Comments

What is God's plan of Redemption?

God's plan of Redemption is Jesus becoming our Redeemer. Although God made everything good *Gen.1:31* and beautiful *Ecc.3:11* when His creation became bad and ugly, God had already devised a plan to restore it to His standard—The Word becoming human and revealing God to us:

So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son. *Jn.1:14*

For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. God chose him as your ransom long before the world began, but now in these last days he has been revealed for your sake. Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And you have placed your faith and hope in God because he raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory. *1Pet.1:18-21*

The Bible was compiled over hundreds of years to be a written record of this plan. The Bible records God's Plan of Redemption in many ways: through prophecy (predicting it), through parables and allegories (illustrating it), through prose (describing it accurately) through poetry (describing it artistically) through history (describing the events that prepared the way for it)—but the purpose of Scripture is to reveal God's Plan of Redemption.

What is "fellowship"?

The Greek word translated "fellowship" is *koinonia* which means "to share".

*Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in **sharing** with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you.*

Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! *2Cor.9:13*

It is also translated

Participate

*Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a **participation** in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.* *1Cor.10:16*

partner

*When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's **partners**. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.* *Lk.5:10*

Communion

*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the **communion** of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.*^{2Cor.13:14NKJV}

What role does the Holy Spirit have in our redeemed life (our life after we have been born-again)?

The Holy Spirit is everything to us that Jesus was to His Disciples because He came to take Jesus' place

If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.^{John.14:15-21}

What is the Fruit of the Spirit? ^{Gal.5:22-23}

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.^{Gal.5:22-23}

Contrast this with the fruit of the flesh

The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.^{Gal.5:19-21}

The fruit of the Spirit is the character of the Holy Spirit—His personality within a Believer.

God is One—a Unity

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.^{Deut.6:4-5}

Although God is One, there are three distinct Persons—God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit and so we call this unity a tri-unity (Trinity).

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."^{Matt.3:16-17}

To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood.^{1Pet.1:1-2}

He [Jesus] came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him [Jesus] we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.^{Eph.2:17-18}

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.^{Eph.1:17}

Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."^{Gal.4:6}

Because God is a Unity, God the Holy Spirit has the same character as God the Father and God the Son—they are One.

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'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living

in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.^{Jn.14:9-11}

Although the Fruit of the Spirit is the character of the Holy Spirit, these attributes don't just appear in us—we have to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. The Bible says that we are to “*clothe ourselves with*” and “*make every effort to add*” these qualities:

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.^{Col.3:12-17}

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is near-sighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.^{2Pet.1:5-9}

Is there a difference between joy and gladness?

Yes and No!

Joy is an emotion but Biblical joy not dependant on circumstances or feelings.

The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him.^{Ps.28:7}

The Levites instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read. Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, “This day is holy to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep.” For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. Nehemiah said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.” The Levites calmed all the people, saying, “Be still, for this is a holy day. Do not grieve.” Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.^{Neh.8:7-12}

to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.^{Is.61:2-3}

02/12/2020

Why we need to learn to Discern.

Questions

What did Jesus mean when He said: *Do not judge.*^{Matt.7:1}

What are the 3 types of Judgement that Corbett mentions?

What is our standard for Moral judgement?

How can we develop our discernment?

What's the difference between an **assertion** and an **argument**?

How can we guard ourself against false teaching?

Comments

What did Jesus mean when He said: *Do not judge.*^{Matt.7:1}

Recurring phrases in the Bible are often used to illustrate a spiritual truth. For example, “east” illustrates the “world” and “west” illustrates God’s presence—c.f. The Tabernacle and the Temple had their main gate on the east side so people always entered facing west. The gate in the garden of Eden was in the east (Gen.3:23-24); Abraham’s altar was east of Bethel so he faced west (Gen.12:8); the Glory of God departed the Temple to the east and then returned from the east (Ezek.10:18-19; 43:1-4). Sun, moon and stars represent Israel; 40 years represent a generation; etc. However, not every phrase and word always has the same literal meaning as that is determined by the context. For instance, the same word Judge is used in these 3 verses:

Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son,^{Jn.5:22}

Jesus replied. “I have much to say in judgment of you.”^{Jn.8:26}

If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day.^{Jn.12:47-48}

Clearly Jesus did make judgements (discerned) and He will judge the righteous and unrighteous alike at the Final Judgement. That is why just looking a word up in the Bible doesn’t always give its true meaning—we need to see its context and interpret it in the light of accepted orthodox doctrine.

And Jesus said that we should interpret (judge/discern) what is happening around us:

He said to the crowd: “When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, ‘It’s going to rain,’ and it does. And when the south wind blows, you say, ‘It’s going to be hot,’ and it is. Hypocrites! You know how to interpret [analyse/forecast/understand/discern] the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don’t know how to interpret this present time?”^{Lk.12:54-56}

Seeing Jesus’ instruction: *Do not judge* in the light of His other teachings, it would seem that He meant that we should not condemn wrong people—even though we should condemn wrong action—because the standards that we use for others, we should expect to be used against us!

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. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.^{Matt.7:1-5}

Neither should we try to sort out who is a “real” Christian and who isn’t a “real” Christian lest we injure the weak Christian—that is for the “harvesters” to do at the end of time.

Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ ‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' 'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.' ¹Matt.13:24-30

However, Church leaders are responsible for what happens in the Church and will be judged for their care and work in the spiritual food they offer.

Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.^{Jas.3:1}

*Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.*²Jn.1:7-11

What are the 3 types of Judgement that Corbett mentions?

1. Final Judgment—this is the exclusive prerogative of Almighty God where the saved are finally redeemed and the rebellious are forever damned.

2. Moral Judgment—this is the consideration of what constitutes right, good, and wise conduct. It also involves church leadership forming a moral judgment about a member's conduct for church discipline issues.

3. Discerning Judgment—this is where a teaching is evaluated for its Scriptural accord. Believers are commanded to make this kind of judgment

What is our standard for Moral judgement?

The Bible—but we must discern between the civil laws given to the OT nation of Israel and God's universal laws that are based on His character of holiness. In the OT God dealt with nations but in the Kingdom of God under the New Covenant, God deals with individuals. That means that whilst we have an obligation to keep God's standards, we cannot impose those standards on others. However, Church leaders have a duty to maintain a standard of holiness for those who are in public ministry.

Nations have a God-given duty to support and protect their citizens from attack and abuse: *Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.*^{Rom.13:1-2}

The duty of a nation to protect its citizens is distinct and separate from the duty of Believers in Kingdom of God—which is righteousness, peace and joy. However, this does not prohibit Christians from serving in the national security services of their nation.

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."^{Jn.18:36}

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval. Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.^{Rom.14:17-19}

How can we develop our discernment?

Stay in fellowship with God, His Word and His people.

Read what Believers down through the ages have written. Pay particular attention to those who have historical credibility—like some of the early Church Fathers, the Reformers

and the Puritans. But remember that these spiritual pioneers (those who led the way out of spiritual darkness) still had a lot of baggage of their past with them. For instance, Martin Luther could not shake off all his RC doctrines (such as the Lords Supper) and persecuted the Anabaptists probably more than the Catholics; Wesley kept some of his Anglican doctrines (i.e. infant baptism). We should not judge yesteryear's people with today's values, knowledge and culture.

What's the difference between an assertion and an argument?

An **assertion** is an unsupported claim which is often just an opinion.

An **argument** is a claim supported by reasons.

Often false teachers promote their ideas without any real arguments. It takes discernment to recognise that someone's arguments are without substance.

Spiritual maturity is not the ability to hear God's voice. Spiritual maturity is the ability to know, understand, and apply Scripture in every circumstance. *Greg Koukl*

How can we guard ourself against false teaching?

Study the Truth within the support of the Church, i.e. where we can ask questions and receive sound, Biblical answers that we can check out for ourselves

Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. As a result, many of them believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.^{Acts.17:11-12}

Test the Truth

I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. But you have this in your favour: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.^{Rev.2:2-6}

Listen to the credible Church leaders

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood^{1Jn.4:1-6}

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.^{2Pet.2:1-3}

Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.^{Col.2:18-19}

Stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. Such things promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God's work—which is by faith. The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Some have departed from these and have turned to meaningless talk. They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.^{1Tim.1:3-7}

Keep reminding God's people of these things. Warn them before God against quarrelling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have departed from the truth.^{2Tim.2:14-18}

25/11/2020

Questions:

A Theology of the Environment

What is the difference between Theism, Deism, Animism, Pantheism, Naturalism, Agnosticism, Atheism and Nihilism? (*Don't worry if this seems difficult as I will give a very brief definition of these at the Bible Study*)

What is the difference between Biblical Christianity and Naturalism?

How are we humans different from the rest of Creation?

What did God mean by “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”?

How can we appreciate Creation without worshipping it?

Find something in the Old Testament about how we should view Creation.

Find something in the New Testament about how we should view Creation

Thought: *Are you more focused on the New Creation than the Old Creation?*

Comments

A Theology of the Environment

What is the difference between Theism, Deism, Animism, Pantheism, Naturalism, Agnosticism, Atheism and Nihilism?

Theism is the belief in the existence of one God viewed as the creative source of the human race and the world who transcends yet is immanent (*existing or operating within; inherent*) in the world. (*A personal belief in Jesus as God's Son who answers prayer They use names for God such as “Saviour,” “Redeemer,” “Resurrected Christ”.*)

Deism is the belief that God somehow initiated but did not intervene in creation. (*Formal Christianity without a personal relationship with God—they use names for God such as “Providence,” “the Creator,” “the Ruler of Great Events,” “Nature's God,” “Merciful Providence,” “Divine Goodness.”*)

Animism is the belief that objects, places, and creatures all possess a distinct spiritual essence. (*including the New Age movement, Shinto—a Japanese folk religion*)

Pantheism is the belief that everything is God or that the universe is a manifestation of God (a version of Naturalism but with the supernatural. (*including Sikhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, and Taoism*))

Naturalism Religious naturalism is the belief that the natural world has religious meaning without any supernatural realm.

Agnosticism is the belief that the existence of God is unknown or unknowable.

Atheism is belief that no deities exist.

Nihilism is the belief that nothing has a real existence.

What is the difference between Biblical Christianity and Naturalism?

Naturalism:

Man gave life to God. Man in his ignorance, prior to his scientific discoveries, created God as an explanation for the universe.

Biblical Christianity:

Almighty God gave life to man. God in His love, created this world (and everything in it) then gave mankind oversight of it under His authority, *i.e.* mankind was created to honour and serve God, worshipping Him alone. However, when man rebelled (sinned), God in His love made a way to restore him to fellowship and union with Him. He did this by becoming man, by living a perfect life and then taking man's punishment upon Himself.

God is transcendent (which means he is separate from his creation), but God is also immanent, (which means he is present in his creation in a personal and relational way). Without his immanence, we fall back into deism, where God is merely creator but never intervenes. God is not only the Creator, but also the Sustainer by intervening in our world and also in our lives.

How are we humans different from the rest of Creation?

Only mankind was made in God's image and given authority over creation:

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."^{Gen.1:26-28}

Whilst all of living creation has a life (which will eventually cease), when God breathed His life into man, He gave him an eternal spirit, and a "God-life".

The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.^{Gen.2:7}

It was only to mankind that God gave instructions and restrictions

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."^{Gen.2:15-17}

What did God mean by *"Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."?*

To use creation (but not abuse it). We are custodians and stewards of God's creation

Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful [Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.]^{1Cor.4:2}

How can we appreciate Creation without worshipping it?

All of creation has a beauty that reflects its Creator

The Mighty One, God, the LORD, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to the place where it sets. From Zion, perfect in beauty, God shines forth.^{Ps.50:1-2}

What does the worker gain from his toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on men. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.^{Ecc.3:9-11}

We can appreciate beauty without letting it control or dominate us

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned

natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.^{Rom.1:18-32}

Worship is reserved for God alone

Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God." At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."^{Rev.19:9-10}

I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"^{Rev.22:8-9}

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire."^{Heb.12:28-29}

Find something in the Old Testament about how we should view Creation.

It is very good

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.^{Gen.1:31}

Care for the needs of our animals

A righteous man regards the life of his animal, But even the merciful acts of the wicked are cruel (toward animals). [A righteous man cares for the needs of his animal, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel].^{Prov.12:10}

"No," he said. Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown. The angel of the LORD asked him, "Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me. The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If she had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared her."^{Nu.22:30-33}

Protect our crops and livestock

David replied to Saul, "Your servant has been a shepherd for his father's flock. Whenever a lion or bear would come and carry off a sheep from the flock, I would go out after it, strike it down, and rescue the sheep from its mouth. If it rose up against me, I would grab it by its jaw, strike it, and kill it. Your servant has struck down both the lion and the bear."^{1Sam.17:34-36}

Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom.^{SolS.2:15}

Interestingly this was a media headline last week: **The town that banned killing rats.**

Since at least the Black Death, the need to control rats by whatever means possible has been a fundamental part of civic life. The town councillors of Bradford on Avon have, however, decreed that their town is immune from the rodent which has plagued practically every other conurbation on the planet for millennia and has subsequently introduced a ban on killing rats. In a statement, the council has said that it "will, as far as the law allows, deny access to those engaged in, and otherwise prohibit, culling or hunting and other types of animal destruction on lands that it controls or manages". It added that "where necessary, this will include deployment of non-lethal methods of rodent control on Town Council lands". After a number of newspaper stories questioning the council's stance it

issued a 'clarification on pest control' in which it repeated its policy, but noted that it "has a legal duty under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 to monitor the presence of rodents on its land, and to act in the event of an infestation, including a duty to destroy them". This is correct, but I am not sure that Bradford on Avon residents will be particularly thrilled to hear that they must be subject to an "infestation" of rats before the council will sanction lethal control. The basis of proper pest control is, of course, to ensure that populations do not reach the level of infestation whereby rats are running across people's doorsteps and posing a threat to human health.

Crop rotation and crop breaks:

The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields.^{Lev.25:11-12}

Most of the Prophets and Poetry books use aspects of creation to illustrate spiritual matters

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake...^{Ps.23}

If you have been trapped by what you said, ensnared by the words of your mouth, then do this, my son, to free yourself, since you have fallen into your neighbour's hands: Go and humble yourself; press your plea with your neighbour! Allow no sleep to your eyes, no slumber to your eyelids. Free yourself, like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, like a bird from the snare of the fowler. Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep?^{Pron.3:2-9}

I have listened attentively, but they do not say what is right. No one repents of his wickedness, saying, "What have I done?" Each pursues his own course like a horse charging into battle. Even the stork in the sky knows her appointed seasons, and the dove, the swift and the thrush observe the time of their migration. But my people do not know the requirements of the LORD.^{Jer.8:6-7}

Like snow in summer or rain in harvest, honour is not fitting for a fool. Like a fluttering sparrow or a darting swallow, an undeserved curse does not come to rest. A whip for the horse, a halter for the donkey, and a rod for the backs of fools! Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself.^{Pron.26:1-4}

Find something in the New Testament about how we should view Creation.

As an example of God's care for us

God knows every sparrow so He knows and permits our circumstances

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.^{Matt.10:28-33}

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.^{Lk.12:6-7}

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his

righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.¹*Matt.6:25-34*

Peter was told to kill and eat “unclean” animals.

*About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.” “Surely not, Lord!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.” The voice spoke to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.” This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.*²*Acts.10:9-16*

Although this was to teach Peter that non-Jews are not “unclean” in God’s sight, it also clearly illustrates that God does not expect us to be vegetarians—although we can be if we want to be!

*Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.*³*Rom.14:5-6*

*“Everything is permissible for me”—but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible for me”—but I will not be mastered by anything. “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food”—but God will destroy them both.*⁴*1Cor.6:12-13*

*Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, for, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.” If some unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. But if anyone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, both for the sake of the man who told you and for conscience’ sake—the other man’s conscience, I mean, not yours. For why should my freedom be judged by another’s conscience? If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for? So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*⁵*1Cor.10:25-31*

Care for animals

*He said to them, “If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”*⁶*2Matt.12:11-12*

Whilst we should care for God’s creation, we should not be over-sentimental. Again, this passage uses a natural principle to illustrate a spiritual truth—but against the back-drop of having dominion over creation.

*Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings; yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord. But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish.*⁷*2Pet.2:10-12*

This present creation will be superseded by another creation at the final resurrection—a new heaven and a new earth

*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*⁸*2Pet.3:10-13*

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration,

not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.^{Rom.8:18-25}

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.^{Rev.21:1-2}

The new heaven and a new earth was prophesied in OT

Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.^{Is.65:17-18} (note the mention of [new] Jerusalem)

Thought:

Make sure that you more focused on the New Creation (spiritual rebirth) than the Old Creation.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.^{2Cor.5:17-18}

18/11/2020

Questions:

Holy Relevant.

What does “holy” mean?

In what sense are we holy?

In the Book of Revelation, what names are given to the physical city of Jerusalem?

In the Book of Revelation, who is the New Jerusalem?

What should we do if we dirty our holiness?

What practical things can we do to stay holy?

Comments:

Holy Relevant.

What does “holy” mean?

The Biblical meaning of holy is: apartness, sacredness, separation, consecration, devotion to the service of God, sharing in God's purity and abstaining from earth's defilement. The English word “*holy*” originally meant “*whole*”.

In what sense are we holy?

Only God is intrinsically holy (as only God is good):

A certain ruler asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone.”^{Lk.18:18-19}

And so our holiness—along with righteousness—is imputed (given) to us

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.^{2Cor.5:21}

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.^{1Cor.1:30}

God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.^{Heb.12:10}

That is why we are called “saints”

To all in Rome who are loved by God and called [to be] saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.^{Rom.1:7} [the words “to be” are not in the Greek]

To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called [to be] holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.^{1Cor.1:2-3} *to you who have been ·made holy [sanctified; dedicated/set apart to God] in Christ Jesus. You were called to be ·God's holy people [saints] with all people everywhere who pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours [theirs and ours].*^{EXB}

However, we must still live up to our new status of holiness

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of one body. “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.^{Eph.4:22-28}

But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.^{Rom.6:22-23}

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau,^{Heb.12:14-16}

“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us—to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.”^{Lk.1:68-75}

In the Book of Revelation, what names are given to the physical city of Jerusalem?

The holy city

I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, “Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.”^{Rev.11:1-2}

The great city, Sodom and Egypt

Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.”^{Rev.11:7-8}

The Mother of Prostitutes

Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. This title was written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly astonished. Then the angel said to me: “Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides... The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.”^{Rev.17:3-18}

The great city and Babylon the Great

A second angel followed and said, “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.”^{Rev.14:8}

“Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird. For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries.” Then I heard another voice from heaven say: “Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes... ‘Was there ever a city like this great city?’ They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out: “Woe! Woe, O great city, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth! In one hour she has been brought to ruin! Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you.” ...The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world's great men. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray. In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth.”^{Rev.18:2-24}

In the Book of Revelation, who is the New Jerusalem?

The New Jerusalem is the people of God

I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God;^{Rev.3:12}

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”^{Rev.21:2}

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal... I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendour into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. ^{Rev.21:10-27}

This definition of the New Jerusalem is also seen in other parts of the New Testament:

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. ^{Heb.12:22-24}

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise. These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written: "Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labour pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband." Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. But what does the Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son." Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman. ^{Gal.4:22-31}

What should we do if we dirty our holiness?

Wash!

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean. ^{Jn13:6-11}

[There was division of the Essenes (a Jewish sect) called *Hemerobaptists* who bathed every morning before the hour of prayer in order to pronounce the name of God with a clean body because they thought salvation could only be attained if they were baptised daily!]

Repent. We don't need to be converted all over again—just repent (change your mind) and confess to Jesus

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. ^{1Jn.1:8-2:2}

Allow the water of the Word to cleanse us

just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*^{Eph.5:25-27}

Remember what Jesus accomplished on the Cross

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.^{1Cor.6:9-11}

“Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land,”^{Is.1:18-19}

What practical things can we do to stay holy?

Worship God

“Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” “Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”^{Mk.12:28-33}

God is love. When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God and God lives in us. This way, love has the run of the house, becomes at home and mature in us, so that we're free of worry on Judgment Day—our standing in the world is identical with Christ's. There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life—fear of death, fear of judgment—is one not yet fully formed in love. We, though, are going to love—love and be loved. First we were loved, now we love. He loved us first. If anyone boasts, “I love God,” and goes right on hating his brother or sister, thinking nothing of it, he is a liar. If he won't love the person he can see, how can he love the God he can't see? The command we have from Christ is blunt: Loving God includes loving people. You've got to love both.^{Jn.4:16-21}

Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’” And he added, “These are the true words of God.” At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”^{Rev.19:9-10}

Stay in fellowship with God, His Word and His people

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 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. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:^{Phil.2:1-5}

Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints send their greetings. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.^{2Cor.13:11-14}

Avoid bad company—we can minister to darkness but we don't need to fellowship with darkness!

Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.” Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.^{1Cor.15:33-34}

11/11/2020

Questions

Where did you cast your first anchor? (What specific promise from God have you based your salvation on?)

What does Repentance mean?

What does Remission of sins mean?

What is the difference between salvation and sanctification?

Comments

Where did you cast your first anchor? (What specific promise from God have you based your salvation on?)

He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved."^{Acts.16:30-31}

My problem was that I wasn't sure what "believe in the Lord Jesus" meant until someone explained it. Believe in the Lord Jesus means to simply trust your life to the resurrected Jesus Christ, God's Son by asking His forgiveness for all your sins—He then becomes your Saviour.

What does Repentance mean?

Repentance literally means "to change your mind". John the Baptist called for the people to remove the obstacles from their lives that might hinder their reception of the Messiah and His kingdom.

He [John] went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all mankind will see God's salvation.'" John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."^{Lk.3:3-9}

Repentance is a change of mind that involves both a **turning from sin** and a **turning to God** (see the parable of the Prodigal Son). In the OT the call to repentance was made to the nation but in the NT the call to repentance is addressed to the individual—God no longer deals with nations or people groups but with individuals. Conversion/new-birth/God's kingdom is a personal matter and cannot be given or received by proxy—people cannot repent on behalf of a nation or community. However people within a nation or community can repent for themselves and it only takes about 10% of a group to change the behaviour of that group!

Conversion means "to turn around and go the other way".

I tell you the truth, unless you change [converted] and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."^{Matt.18:3-4}

Also

When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning [converted] to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel."^{Lk.7:9}

When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned [converted] the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood."^{Matt.27:3-4}

Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back [some versions have converted], strengthen your brothers.^{Lk.22:31-32}

True repentance which will always include these 5 A's:

Acknowledgement of the wrong.

Apology for the wrong.

Action of determination to change.

Appreciation of God's forgiveness.

Attitude of grace, gratitude and gentleness towards God and people.

What does Remission of sins mean?

"This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and remission [forgiveness] of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."^{Lk.24:46-49}

Remission means dismissal, release, freedom

*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim **freedom [remission]** for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to **release [remission]** the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.*^{Lk.4:18-19}

We are to preach/proclaim that our sins have been remitted/forgiven/dismissed and we are released from them and their eternal consequences (although we are often left with the physical consequences).

What is the difference between salvation and sanctification?

Salvation is the inworking of God's grace—the forgiveness of sins. We are saved from our sins.

And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.^{Lk.1:76-79}

Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.^{Heb.9:27-28}

Sanctification is the outworking of that salvation—maturity.

But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.^{2Thess.2:13}

Maturity is the ability to apply God's Word to our life because we have understood the basics of our faith:

In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so.^{Heb.5:12-6:3}

Maturity is being able to stand in our own faith and not blown around by fear, doubt or unbelief. *If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.*^{1s.7:9}

But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.^{1Cor.15:57-58}

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love.^{1Cor.16:13-14}

Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm.^{2Cor.1:24}

So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.^{2Thess.2:15}

The One who came down is the same as the One who went up higher than all the heavens. He did it in order to fill all of creation. He is the One who gave some the gift to be apostles. He gave some the gift to be prophets. He gave some the gift of preaching the good news. And he gave some the gift to be pastors and teachers. He did it so that they might prepare God's people to serve. If they do, the body of Christ will be built up. That will continue until we all become one in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son. Then we will be grown up in the faith. We will receive everything that Christ has for us. We will no longer be babies in the faith. We won't be like ships tossed around by the waves. We won't be blown here and there by every new teaching. We won't be blown around by the cleverness and tricks of people who try to hide their evil plans. Instead, we will speak the truth in love. We will grow up into Christ in every way.^{Eph.4:10-15}

Maturity comes through trials and testings:

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.^{Jas.1:2-4}

4/11/2020

Ephesians 4:1-10

Video: Proverbs Intro

Questions:

1. In your own words, explain the purpose of Scripture.
2. What is your favourite passage in the OT that clearly point to Jesus?
3. How does that apply to your salvation?
4. What **should you not do** with the difficult parts of Scripture?
5. What **should you do** with the difficult parts of Scripture?
6. What are the benefits of learning Scripture?
7. How can we apply Scripture to our everyday situations?
8. What is your favourite passage out of the whole Bible?

Comments:

In your own words, explain the purpose of Scripture.

To show God's plan of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ

The Bible was written for us, **not** to us! The original readers to whom the various letters and books were written, understood exactly what was meant—especially the colloquialisms and cultural illustrations.

However, because **ALL** Scripture is inspired by God (God-breathed), and all Scripture was written for us, then all Scripture is relevant to us. Collectively the individual parts of Scripture make up the whole picture—which is God's plan of Salvation through Jesus Christ. *Tell me the old, old story of Jesus and His love... Tell me the story slowly, that I may take it in—that wonderful redemption, God's remedy for sin.* If we read any more than that into the Bible, we are likely to distort them.

Jesus specifically told His disciples not to focus on times or dates but to fulfil the Great Commission:

"It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts.1:7-8

Even in Paul's time, some people were promoting controversies rather than the Gospel which then caused some to wander from the truth:

As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work—which is by faith. The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk. They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm. 1Tim.1:3-7

Some people got involved in food fads and other novelties under the guise of religion (which Paul called demonic) and again Paul said we should focus on the Great Commission

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer. If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed. Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales [silly stories that get dressed up as religion]; rather, train yourself to be godly. 1Tim.4:1-7

For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths [spiritual junk food—catchy opinions that tickle their fancy]. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. 2Tim.4:3-5

Paul warned about the Jewish influence in the Church, especially about their teaching about keeping the Jewish Laws (which included the culture of the Temple)

For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain. Even one of their own prophets has said, “Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.” This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth. Tit.1:10-14

What is your favourite passage in the OT that clearly point to Jesus?

Abraham and Isaac.

The analogy is so clear: God offering His Son as a sacrifice on Mt Moriah (which is where Jerusalem is) and God saying that He will provide (a lamb). Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

And when I think, that God, His Son not sparing;
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in;
That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin.

How does that apply to your salvation?

Jesus, God's Son, under the supervision of the Father, died for my sins and yet He still lives. And because Jesus is the Lamb that God provided, we are saved from death—

Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! Jn.1:29

What should you not do with the difficult parts of Scripture?

Don't over-emphasise them

Don't distort them!

Don't make a doctrine out of them

What should you do with the difficult parts of Scripture?

Do read them in the light of the clear and accepted doctrines of the Christian faith.

What are the benefits of learning Scripture?

They teach us about salvation and about righteousness; they equip us to live holy lives.

*But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. **All Scripture** is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2Tim3:14-17*

They are our spiritual food

Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ Matt.4:4

They have important lessons that we can learn from:

Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry." We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test the Lord, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel. These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.^{1Cor.10:6-13}

How can we apply Scripture to our everyday situations?

Ask God for wisdom

Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.^{Jas.1:4-8}

Use that wisdom to apply the principles found in the Scriptures to our life

See how the people in the Bible dealt with situations—whether positively or negatively

Let the spiritual presence of God within the Scriptures nourish our spirit

When Moses finished reciting all these words to all Israel, he said to them, "Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess."^{Dent.32:45-47}

For nothing is impossible with God. [For no word from God will ever fail/ be void of power.]^{Lk.1:37}

The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.^{Jn.6:63}

What is your favourite passage out of the whole Bible?

Luke 16:19-31

Not only does it mention dogs but there is a description of angels escorting Lazarus into God's presence and explains that the Scriptures are all we need to know about God's plan of Salvation.

28/10/2020

Ephesians 3:14-21

Video: Isaiah42 and Ephesians5 (7.28minsf)

Questions

1. What is the difference between the revelation that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God from “*flesh and blood*” and the revelation from God? (Matt.16:16-17; Gal.1:16; 1Cor.15:50; Eph.6:12; Heb.2:14—you may need to look up more than one translation to find “*flesh and blood*”).
2. Although the words “*praise*” and “*worship*” are sometimes interchangeable, how does Ruth Heflin explain the difference?
3. List as many English words for *praise* and *worship* as you can.
4. The Old Covenant priests offered animals as sacrifices to God. What do we offer to God as New Covenant priests? (Heb.13:15-15; Rom.12:1-2;15:15-16; 1Pet.2:4-10)
5. Which is your favourite word for Praise from the list Praise words below?
6. Which is your favourite verse about praise?

Comments

1. **What is the difference between the revelation that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God from “*flesh and blood*” and the revelation from God? (**

Revelation of who Jesus is can be an academic insight—he was a good man, a prophet, a martyr, etc. This is a human ability and good but not spiritual. When God reveals who Jesus is, He gives us spiritual insight or a spiritual knowledge. Only people who have the Holy Spirit can understand spiritual matters:

We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him”—but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. 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. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: “For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.^{1Cor.2:6-16}

Below are passages where ***flesh and blood*** is used:

*Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by **flesh and blood [man]**, but by my Father in heaven. and I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”*^{Matt.16:16-17}

*But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with **flesh and blood [consult with any man]**, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.*^{Gal.1:16}

I declare to you, brothers, that **flesh and blood** cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”^{1Cor.15:50-54}

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against **flesh and blood**, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.^{Eph.6:10-13}

Since the children have **flesh and blood**, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.^{Heb.2:14-15}

2. Although the words “*praise*” and “*worship*” are sometimes interchangeable, how does Ruth Heflin explain the difference?

Praise is talking about God and worship is talking to God. Praise is from afar, worship is close up (i.e. kiss)

3. List as many English words for *praise* and *worship* as you can.

Praise, worship, adoration, glory, laud, honour, blessing, exalt, reverence, devotion,

4. The Old Covenant priests offered animals as sacrifices to God. What do we offer to God as New Covenant priests?

Praise (this is what is on our lips, not just what's in our mind), **doing good** (living a holy life) and **sharing with others** (especially encouragement, edification and exhortation)

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.^{Heb.13:15-16}

A holy lifestyle that comes from a renewed mind

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.^{Rom.12:1-2}

Sharing our faith (proclaiming the gospel)

I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another. Yet I have written you quite boldly on some points to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God.^{Rom.15:14-17}

Praise (including collective praise, i.e. praising God together with other Believers)

As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” and, “A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for. But you are a chosen people, a

royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. ^{1Pet.2:4-10}

5. Which is your favourite word for Praise from the list Praise words below?

Hallel (from where we get **Hallelujah**): this word means to express our love for God as a demonstration of what we think of God

You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honour him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel! ^{Ps.22:23}

6. Which is your favourite verse about praise?

My favourite verse: O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger. ^{Ps.8:1-2}

But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant and said to Him, "Do You hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes. Have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected [created] praise?'" Then He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and He lodged there. ^{Matt.21:15-17}

Praise

Hallel: used approx. 160 times in OT. To shine, boast, celebrate, commend (especially beauty), sing, be clear, laud; implies unashamed use of voice in demonstration of what you think of God. (Complete abandonment of self because we are in love (with God) as in marriage; head over heels in love) *Ps.22:23*

Tehillah: used approx. 57 times. To sing or laud; derived from *hallel* and usually means the singing of *Hallels*. It is perceived as involving music, especially singing. It is the praise that God inhabits, implying that God has responded and is enthroned in the midst of *tehillah* praise *Ps.22:3, 25*

Yadah: (Judah) used approx. 120 times in OT. Thankful expression of praise from root word meaning to throw out the hand; hence to lift up hands. (hands are an extension of our personalities.) [God loves it, flesh hates it and devil is devastated by it] *Ps.9:1 Ps.52:9*

Barak: used approx. 330 times in OT. To kneel bless salute praise. Of all the words for praise, this is the only one that infers some kind of silence *Ps.96:2*. To praise God (*barak*) is to enthrone Him as Lord—to kneel before Him; thus when He no longer has pre-eminence in our lives we praise (*barak*) someone or something else. This is called a curse. *See Job 1:5*.

Zamar: used 40 times: to make music, lit to pluck the strings and sing praises accompanied by that music. (Gk *Psalms*) *Ps.47:7*

Towdah: used approx. 30 times. Thanksgiving. A sacrifice of praise or thanks before receiving the manifestation—a total agreement with the Word. It is an act of faith beyond which God moves to bring deliverance. Also implies lifting of hands; in Leviticus it is used in connection with offering of thanksgiving which has already been examined for purity. *Lev.7:12,13,15; Lev.22:29; Ps.50:23*

Shabach: used approx. 7 times. To commend, triumph, glory, shout *Ps.63:3*

Shachah: means to bow down, prostrate, to fall on knees with forehead touching the ground, to fall flat, to reverence. *Gen.22:5; Ex.34:14; Ps.95:6*

Proskuneo (Gk): means to crouch, do reverence, adore. The word is taken from a word meaning to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand. Worship is not a distant thing but an

intimate activity. *Jn.4:20-24; Lk.4:7-8* the devil asked Jesus to worship him and he craves for that but he can never receive *proskuneo* because it is only performed in mutual love.

Latreuo (Gk): means to minister to God, to serve (as a slave completely sold out to his lord and master). *Acts 24:14 (vs 11 proskuneo, vs14 latreuo)*

Eulogeō (Gk): to speak well of, praise, giving a blessing

Doxazō (Gk): to esteem glorious, to honour; have a good opinion.

God is worthy of praise *Ps.18:3; Ps.145:3; 2Sam.22:4*

God creates praise *Is.57:18-19*

God has ordained praise *Ps.8:1-2*

God is our praise *Deut.10:21*

God is the theme of our praise *Ps.22:25*

God formed us to praise Him *Is.43:21*

God is enthroned on our praises *Ps.22:3*

God the Father is to be praised *Luke10:21; Eph.1:3*

Jesus is to be praised *2Cor.11:31*

Praise is glorious *Ps.66:2*

Praise is good *Ps.92:1*

Praise honours God *Ps.50:23*

Praise is for everyone *Ps.103:21; Ps.117:1*

Praise is for everywhere *Ps.113:3*

Praise is forever *Ps.52:9; Ps.71:6; Rom.1:25; Rom.9:5*

Praise is a garment we put on *Is.61:3*

Praise is for happy people *Jas.5:13*

Praise is passionate *Ps.9:1; Ps.86:12; Ps.138:1*

Praise is personal *Ps.42:5/11; Ps.43:5*

Praise is corporate *Ps.22:22; Ps.44:8; Ps.67:3*

Praise is a sacrifice *Heb.13:15*

Praise is a free-will offering *Ps.54:6; Ps.119:108*

Praise is fitting *Ps.33:1; Ps.147:1*

Praise prepares a way for God's salvation *Ps.50:23*

Praise defeats the enemy *Ps.149:6-9; 2Chron.20:21-22*

Praise is audible *Ps.66:8; Jer.31:7;*

Praise is loud *Ps.26:7; Luke 17:15 Luke 19:37*

Praise is to be always on our lips *Heb.13:15; Ps.34:1*

Praise can be spoken *Lk.2:28*

Praise can be in tongues *Acts10:46*

Praise can be sung *Ps.9:2; 1Chron.16:9; Neh.12:46*

Praise can be with music *Ps.33:2; Ps.40:3; Ps.150:3*

Praise can be with dancing *Ps.149:3; Ps.150:4*

Praise awaits God in Zion *Ps.65:1*

21/10/2020

Ephesians 3:7-13

Video: Isaiah42 and Ephesians5 (1-7mins)

Questions

- What is your definition of a “miracle”?
- Does God always hear us when we pray?
- Does God always respond to prayer?
- What does God respond to?
- How would you define “spiritual maturity”?
- What is “spiritual balance”?
- How can we keep spiritually balanced?

Comments

What is your definition of a “miracle”?

You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples.^{Ps.77:14}

A miracle is a natural event with a supernatural cause

Apart from creative miracles, such as dead brought to life or new body parts, most miracles consist of a natural event with God’s supernatural timing cf. The Exodus miracles and even many of Jesus’ miracles.

Miracles authenticated Jesus’ ministry

Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.^{Jn.20:30-31}

“Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders,” Jesus told him, “you will never believe.”^{Jn.4:48}

So they asked him, “What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?”^{Jn.6:30}

The Jews gathered around him, saying, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered, “I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father’s name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”^{Jn.10:24-27}

Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’? Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.”^{Jn.10:36-38}

Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.^{Jn.14:11}

You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.^{Acts.10:36-38}

Miracles authenticated apostles’ ministry

So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders. The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles.^{Acts.14:3-4}

I have made a fool of myself, but you drove me to it. I ought to have been commended by you, for I am not in the least inferior to the “super-apostles,” even though I am nothing. The things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance^{2Cor.12:11-12}

Not all miracles are from God—even if done in Jesus' Name!

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn-bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. ‘Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 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.’”^{1Matt.7:15-23}

The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.”^{2Thess.2:9-12}

Does God always hear us when we pray?

God always hears everything, but He does not always pay attention to everything we say! However, God does pay attention to the prayers of the righteous:

The LORD is far from the wicked but he hears the prayer of the righteous.”^{Pron.15:29}

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”^{1Pet.3:8-12}

Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.”^{Jas.5:13-18}

And God does answer prayer

Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!”^{Psa.66:20}

Does God always respond to prayer?

No! God does not always respond to prayer—especially if there is no faith or if we are not in fellowship with Him (

Hear my prayer, O LORD, listen to my cry for help; be not deaf to my weeping.”^{Psa.39:12}

Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea; hear me and answer me. My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught at the voice of the enemy, at the stares of the wicked; for they bring down suffering upon me and revile me in their anger.”^{Psa.55:1-3}

Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right!”^{Is.1:14-17}

So do not pray for this people nor offer any plea or petition for them; do not plead with me, for I will not listen to you.”^{Jer.7:16}

But God does respond to Believers' prayers—by people who are trusting God (this is different from trusting for the answer we want!).

He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea.^{Ps.102:17}

What does God respond to?

God responds to faith

*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.*^{Heb.11:6}

*As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly **blesses all who call on him**, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*^{Rom.10:11-13}

The LORD is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made. The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.^{Ps.145:17-18}

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.^{Heb.10:19-23}

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.^{Heb.4:16}

How would you define "spiritual maturity"?

Spiritual maturity is not the ability to hear God's voice. It is the ability to know, understand, and apply Scripture in every circumstance.^{Greg Koukl}

What is "spiritual balance"?

Balance is the ability to integrate all the teaching of Scripture on a particular topic.

Balance means understanding enough of the Scripture, so that you have the breadth not to distort any particular thing. That comes with time—it doesn't happen overnight.^{Greg Koukl}

How can we keep spiritually balanced?

Stay in fellowship with God, His Word and His people. Keep on doing the basics of our Christian faith—Bible study (read and regurgitate), prayer (sensible New Covenant petition prayers, but also contemplative prayers), give thanks in every situation.

May the matter of my prayer be always wise, humble, submissive, obedient, scriptural, Christ-like. I am loved with everlasting love, clothed in eternal righteousness, my peace flowing like a river, my comforts many and large, my joy and triumph unutterable, my soul lively with a knowledge of salvation, my sense of justification unclouded. I have scarce anything to pray for; Jesus smiles upon my soul as a ray of heaven and my supplications are swallowed up in praise.^{from Puritan Prayers}

14/10/2020

(Away)

Questions:

How would you define Prayer?

Why should we pray?

Is there a time when we shouldn't pray?

Is it a sin to be tempted?

How can we overcome temptations?

What role does the Holy Spirit have in our prayers?

What role does the Holy Spirit have in resisting temptation?

What should we do if yield to temptation?

07/10/2020

Ephesians 3:1-6

Video: When CPR Doesn't Work

Until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

Questions:

1. What is the significance of Passover?
2. How does the Bible define a slave? (see 2Pet.2:19; Heb.2:14-15; Rom.6:16; Jn.8:34-36)
3. What is your definition of the Kingdom of God?
4. Who qualifies to be a citizen in God's kingdom?
5. What does "repentance" mean?
6. What does true repentance achieve (see 2Cor.7:10)
7. What are the signs of true repentance?

Comments

1. What is the significance of Passover?

Vicarious Judgement (lamb killed—and those who didn't participate were judged and the 1stborn died)

Emancipation of slaves

A holy nation was founded

Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover. "On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn—both men and animals—and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt. This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD—a lasting ordinance."^{Ex.12:11-14}

By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.^{Heb.11:28}

Fulfilment was in Jesus our Passover Lamb

Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.^{1Cor.5:6-8}

Vicarious Judgement (Jesus was killed—and those who don't participate are judged and will die)

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.^{Jn.3:18}

Emancipation of slaves (from sin)

Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."^{Jn.8:34-36}

Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.^{Rom.6:16-18}

A holy nation was founded (the Church)

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.^{1Pet.2:9-10}

2. How does the Bible define a slave?

A slave is anyone who is controlled by someone or something else.

They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.^{2Pet.2:19}

Slave to sin. This is the worst kind of slavery because it leads to death

Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.^{Rom.6:16-18}

I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.^{Jn.8:34-36}

Slave to fear (especially of death)

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.^{Heb.2:14-15}

3. What is your definition of the Kingdom of God?

The rule of Christ within the life of a Believer

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.^{Matt.7:21}

The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,^{Rom.14:17}

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.^{1Cor.4:20}

4. Who qualifies to be a citizen in God's kingdom?

Only those whom God has qualified!

Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.^{Col.1:12-14}

in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls.^{Rom.9:11-12}

5. What does “repentance” mean?

Repentance means “change your thinking” and so Christian repentance is changing our thinking—especially our thinking about God, about sin and about ourself. Our old pattern of thinking, seeing, talking, acting, behaving and reacting must change and a new pattern must take its place.

If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creation old things are passed away behold all things have become new.^{2Cor.5:17}

6. What does true repentance achieve? (see 2Cor.7:10)

Salvation and forgiveness—including a good conscience

Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.^{2Cor.7:10}

“If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.” The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”^{Lk.17:3-5}

This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it."^{Is.30:15}

Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall! Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to him: "Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips."^{Hos.14:1-2}

Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father." I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham."^{Mat.3:8-9}

This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."^{Lk.24:46-47}

Do you have contempt for God, who is very kind to you, puts up with you, and deals patiently with you? Don't you realize that it is God's kindness that is trying to lead you to him and change the way you think and act? Since you are stubborn and don't want to change the way you think and act, you are adding to the anger that God will have against you on that day when God vents his anger. At that time God will reveal that his decisions are fair. He will pay all people back for what they have done. He will give everlasting life to those who search for glory, honour, and immortality by persisting in doing what is good. But he will bring anger and fury on those who, in selfish pride, refuse to believe the truth and who follow what is wrong."^{GWT}

Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will."^{2Tim.2:25-26}

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

7. What are the signs of true repentance?

Acknowledgement of the wrong.

Apology for the wrong.

Action of determination to change.

Appreciation of God's forgiveness.

Attitude of grace, gratitude and gentleness towards God and people.

30/09/2020

Ephesians 2

Video: Eph.2

Watch out that you are not misled. ^{Lk.21:8}

Questions:

1. How would you answer Pilate's question: "What is Truth?"
2. How can we ensure that we stand firm in the faith and don't get swept along with the current of popular opinion or appeasement?
3. How can we ensure that we don't make the wrong choices through ignorance?
4. How can we ensure that we don't make the wrong choices through deception?
5. How can we access God's healing if we discover that we have been deceived?
6. How can we keep our minds from being dulled?
7. How can we ensure that we grow in the faith?

Comments:

1. How would you answer Pilate's question: "What is Truth?"

Truth is reality

I tell you the truth," Jesus answered,^{Mk.14:30} *I assure you,*^{HCSB} *Verily I say unto thee,*^{Gen} *Truly, I tell you,*^{ESV} *I can guarantee this truth:*^{GWT} *Assuredly, I say to you.*^{NKJV}

Truth is embodied, or personalised in Jesus

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."^{Jn.14:6}

Everything Jesus was and stood for could be described as "truth".

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.^{Jn.1:14}

The Word of God is truth

For most people, truth is their reality—how they view something. That makes their truth subjective rather than absolute! No one in their right mind would believe an untruth and so they believe that their reality—beliefs, views and opinions—is truth (even though they may be the opposite from someone else's beliefs and opinions). That is why we need a standard to measure to evaluate our beliefs. Christians believe that God has given the Bible to be His Standard. However, we need to be able discern the Word of God, not just quote it—we need to understand the New Birth and the New Covenant in Jesus' blood.

And if you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word that the LORD has not spoken?'—when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.^{Dent.18:21-22}

This God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is flawless [proves true]; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.^{2Sam.22:31}

For the word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does.^{Ps.33:4}

Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.^{Jn.17:17}

He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.^{Jas1:18}

Also *Eph.1:13; Col.1:5; 2Tim.2:15*

2. How can we ensure that we stand firm in the faith and don't get swept along with the current of popular opinion or appeasement?

If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.^{Is.7:9}

Build ourselves up in the faith by avoiding the company of scoffers and other divisive people and by prayer

But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, "In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires." These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit. But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.^{Jude.1:17-21}

By studying the Word of God

"I prayed for faith and thought that someday faith would come down and strike me like lightning. But faith did not seem to come. One day I read in the tenth chapter of Romans, "So faith comes from hearing the message. And the message that is heard is the word of Christ." I had closed my Bible and prayed for faith but I now opened my Bible and began to study—and faith has been growing ever since." *D. L. Moody*

3. How can we ensure that we don't make the wrong choices through ignorance?

Avoid bad company (we should minister to darkness but not fellowship with darkness)

Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.^{1Cor.15:33-34}

Know what God has recorded in the Scriptures

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.^{1Thess.4:13}

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited.^{Rom.11:25}

Understand the Scriptures and don't distort/misquote them.

His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.^{2Pet.3:16}

You are always on their [the faithless and wicked] lips but far from their hearts.^{Jer.12:2}

Live a godly life (this different from living a good life.)

For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king.^{1Pet.2:15-17}

4. How can we ensure that we don't make the wrong choices through deception?

Avoid divisive people.

I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.^{Rom.16:17-18}

Avoid people who deny Jesus Christ is truly God and truly human.

Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.^{2Jn.7-11}

Avoid people who believe that they are sinless (or who offers perfection)

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.^{1Jn.1:8}

Avoid those who claim to be Believers but live immoral lives and lie (don't speak the truth)

Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.^{Jas.1:21-22}

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.^{2Tim.3:12-15}

Be cautious of philosophy and human reasoning (philosophy and psychology are not evil but they usually ignore God and promote human reasoning).

I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments... See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,^{Col.2:4-9}

Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a "fool" so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight.^{1Cor.3:18-19}

5. How can we access God's healing if we discover that we have been deceived?

God healed us from the effect of deception when we were born-again and He is still the same God with the same healing power

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour,^{Tit.3:3-6}

6. How can we keep our minds from being dulled?

Avoid excessive alcohol and anxiety

Be on your guard, so that your minds are not dulled [Lit your hearts are not weighed down] from carousing, [or hangovers] drunkenness, and worries of life, or that day will come on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come on all who live on the face of the whole earth. But be alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place and to stand before the Son of Man.^{Lk.21:34-36}

Stay alert

Be alert at all times. Pray so that you have the power to escape everything that is about to happen and to stand in front of the Son of Man.^{Lk.21:36}

Be alert. Be firm in the Christian faith. Be courageous and strong. Do everything with love.^{1Cor.16:13-14}

Turn all your anxiety over to God because he cares for you. Keep your mind clear, and be alert. Your opponent the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion as he looks for someone to devour. Be firm in the faith and resist him.^{1Pet.5:7-9}

7. How can we ensure that we grow in the faith?

Keep in fellowship with God, His Word and His people

Fellowship is a communion—a partnership and a participation. It is not God speaking to us to us speaking to God but an interaction and a dialogue. And it is the same with fellowship with other Believers—it is a partnership where we interact and participate. Church is not a spectator activity where we come to be spiritually fed—it is a participation activity where come to be fed **and also** to feed others with our encouragements, exhortations and edifications.

23/09/2020

Ephesians 1:15-23

Video: *John6*

Questions:

Is there life after death? *He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*^{Lk.20:38}

1. How can we “peer-review” our ideas of God and Christianity?
2. What role does the Bible have in discerning (checking and testing) what the Holy Spirit is saying to us?
3. What role does the Church (the gathered Believers) have in discerning (checking and testing) what the Holy Spirit is saying to us?
4. Why should we pay particular attention to our character (rather than our charisma)?
5. Why is Jesus’ resurrection so important to our faith and our life?
6. What do you think the “old” means in 2Cor.5:17? (*If anyone is in Christ Jesus they are a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.*^{2Cor. 5:17})
7. What do you think the “new” means in 2Cor.5:17?
8. How can we keep the old away and the new near?

Comments:

1 How can we “peer-review” our ideas of God and Christianity?

Stay in fellowship with God, His Word and His People.

This is more than a casual attendance at Church Services. Christian Fellowship requires a meaningful personal relationship with God, His Word and His People which comes from our private devotions and our public participation in the Church activities. Our Thought for the Month reminds that faith comes from God’s Word, not prayer!

I prayed for faith and thought that someday faith would come down and strike me like lightning. But faith did not seem to come. One day I read in the tenth chapter of Romans, "*So faith comes from hearing the message. And the message that is heard is the word of Christ.*" I had closed my Bible and prayed for faith but I now opened my Bible and began to study—and faith has been growing ever since. *D. L. Moody*

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.^{Acts.2:42}

When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.^{1Cor.14:26}

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.^{Acts.17:11}

Our objective is to become **Bible Literate** by having a reasonable understanding of the whole Bible **and** its application.

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved [Study to show yourself approved unto God], a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.^{2Tim.2:15}

Isolation is foolish and selfish

A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgment. [An unfriendly man pursues selfish ends; he defies all sound judgment.]^{Pron.18:1}

Isolation from people and food is the quickest way to encounter the devil!

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said... Matt.4:1-3

2 What role does the Bible have in discerning (checking and testing) what the Holy Spirit is saying to us?

The Bible is our manual for life

AoG Statement of Faith: *We believe that the Bible (i.e. the Old and New Testaments excluding the Apocrypha), is the inspired Word of God, the infallible, all sufficient rule for faith and practice.*

ELIM Statement of Faith: *We believe the Bible, as originally given, to be without error, the fully inspired and infallible Word of God and the supreme and final authority in all matters of faith and conduct.*

The Word of God is more than good advice—it is God’s advice!

The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.*^{Jn.6:63}

When Moses finished reciting all these words to all Israel, he said to them, “Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.”^{Dent.32:45-47}

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.^{2Tim3:16-17}

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.^{Acts.17:11}

To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.^{Is.8:20}
I will bow down toward your holy temple and will praise your name for your love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word. When I called, you answered me; you made me bold and stouthearted.^{Ps.138:2-3}

Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.^{Josh.1:8-9}

3 What role does the Church (the gathered Believers) have in discerning (checking and testing) what the Holy Spirit is saying to us?

The Church is the gathering of Believers and this is God’s safeguard for us.

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, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.^{Eph3:10-11}

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.^{Eph.4:11-13}

When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up. If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to God. Two or three people should speak what God has revealed. Everyone else should decide whether what each person said is right or wrong... All of you can take your turns speaking what God has revealed. In that way, everyone will learn and be encouraged. People who speak what God has revealed must control themselves. God is not a God of disorder but a God of peace.^{1Cor.14:26-33}

Although the Church is not infallible, if the leaders are Believers and open to the Holy Spirit, they should be able to keep error to the minimum. History shows that error comes when the Church allows unbelievers or people with unorthodox beliefs (heresies) to give direction—especially when Church tradition takes precedence over clear New Covenant teaching in the Bible.

4 Why should we pay particular attention to our character (rather than our charisma)?

Our gifting is just that—a gift. Our character is our developed personality that we are responsible for—and comes from making the right choices (or correcting the wrong choices) *Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.*^{Heb.5:13-14}

5 Why is Jesus' resurrection so important to our faith and our life?

And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.^{1Cor.15:14-19}

6 What do you think the “old” means in 2Cor.5:17? (If anyone is in Christ Jesus they are a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.)^{2Cor. 5:17}

Our old nature, old way of thinking, old way of living

7 What do you think the “new” means in 2Cor.5:17?

Our new nature, new way of thinking, new way of living.

We are meant to be people of integrity who walk the walk as well as talk the talk..

So walk in the way of good people and stay on the paths of righteous people. Decent people will live in the land. People of integrity will remain in it.^{Pron.2:20-21}

He whose walk is blameless [walks in integrity] is kept safe, but he whose ways are perverse will suddenly fall. He who works his land will have abundant food, but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty.^{Pron.28:18}

We are also the people of God—whose hearts are set on heavenly matters (heavenly minded without being earthly useless!)

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*^{Col.3:1-4}

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.^{Rom.8:5}

8 How can we keep the old away and the new near?

Train our minds to think like God

Renew our minds

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.^{Rom.12:1-2}

Clean our minds with the Word of God

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.^{Eph.5:25-27}

Meditate on God and seek His Kingdom

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.^{Ps.1:1-3}

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.^{Matt.6:33-34}

16/09/2020

Ephesians 1:11-14

Video: 1Cor.15 (10:23)

Questions:

1. Explain in your own words: *Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.*^{Lk.20:25}
2. What is the difference between the Moral Laws and the other Laws (Food Laws, Ceremonial Laws and, Civil Laws) of the Old Covenant?
3. What should have made the nation of Israel distinct from the rest of the world?
4. What makes Christians distinct from the rest of the world?
5. When did the Old Covenant end and when did the New Covenant begin?
6. What is the Christian's obligation to the civilian authorities?

Comments:

1. **Explain in your own words:** *Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.*^{Lk.20:25}

There is a distinction between Church and State and the 2 kingdoms run parallel. They are not mutually exclusive.

*This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour then honour.*Rom.13:6-7

2. **What is the difference between the Moral Laws and the other Laws** (*Food Laws, Ceremonial Laws and, Civil Laws*) of the Old Covenant?

The moral laws (summed up in the Ten Commandments—Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5) are nearly all repeated in the New Testament (and can be summed up in the Royal Law of love.

The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbour as yourself." Gal.5:14

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbour as yourself," you are doing right.^{Jas.2:8}

The other Laws were specifically for the Nation of Israel whilst they were under the Old Covenant.

3. **What should have made the nation of Israel distinct from the rest of the world?**

Israel was meant to be a holy nation and kingdom of priests who worshipped only the Lord:

Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.^{Ex.19:5-6}

*I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments. You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.*Ex.20:1-7

4. **What makes Christians distinct from the rest of the world?**

We have peace with God

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)—remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise,

without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Eph.2:11-18

We are a royal priesthood, a holy nation:

They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. ^{1Pet.2:8-10}

And because we are God's special possession, we are distinct—not distinct by the way we are treated but distinct by the way we behave!

5. When did the Old Covenant end and when did the New Covenant begin?

Old Covenant ended when the New Covenant began—which was Jesus' death

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." Lk.22:20

However, the 2 Covenants ran in parallel for 40 years until the Temple was destroyed

By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear. ^{Heb.8:13}

At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory... Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. ^{Matt.24:30-35}

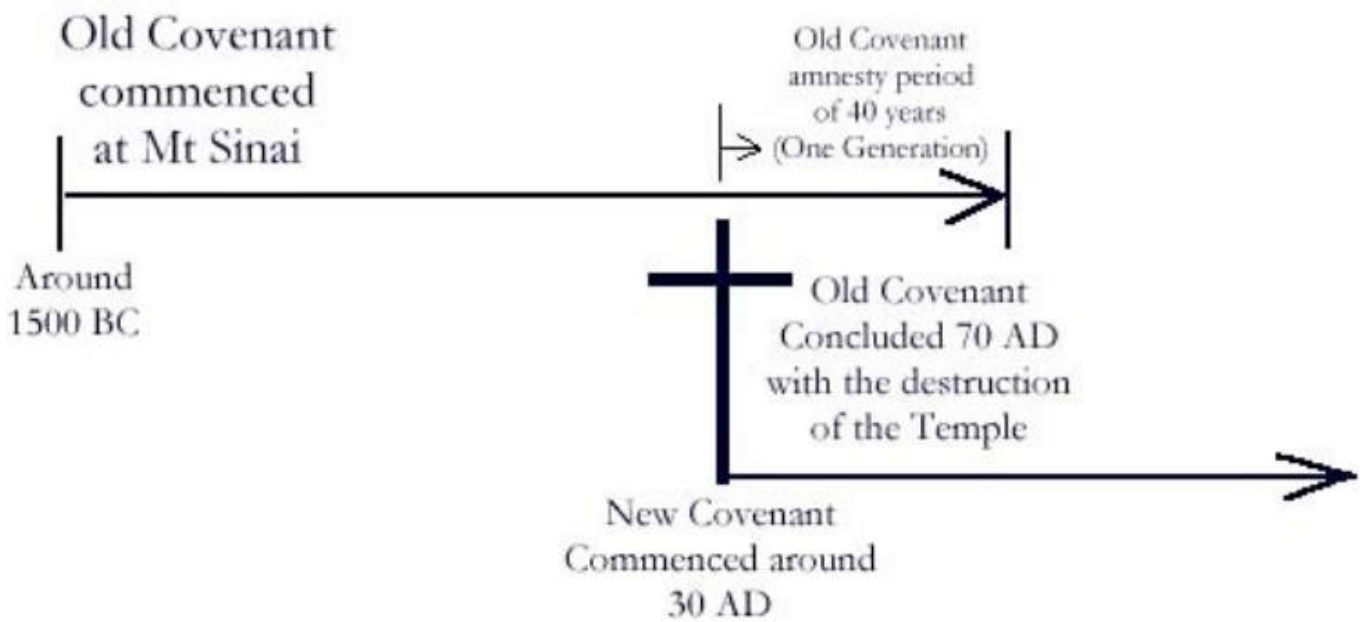
(heaven and earth = God's covenant; generation = 40 years; Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven = ascension see Dan.7:13)

So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. They produced false witnesses, who testified, "This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us." Acts.6:12-14

Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. Acts.15:1-2

When they heard this, they praised God. Then they said to Paul: "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come, so do what we tell you. There are four men with us who have made a vow. Take these men, join in their purification rites and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everyone will know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law. As for the Gentile believers, we have written to them our decision that they should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality." Acts.20:20-25

Hebrews 8:13



6. What is the Christian's obligation to the civilian authorities?

We are under the law of our country and we have an obligation to honour our rulers because their office is ordained of God.

*Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. **Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honour the king.***^{1Pet.2:13-17}

09/09/2020

Ephesians 1:1-10

Video: 1Cor.15

Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.^{Lk19:38}

Questions:

1. What does “*home*” mean to you?
2. How would you describe heaven?
3. Find some Bible verses to support your definition of heaven
4. How can we be “*heavenly-minded*” **AND** also be of some earthly use?
5. How can we safeguard against deception?
6. What was so special about the city of Jerusalem?
7. What is the New Jerusalem?
8. What does the symbolism of Jerusalem say about our relationship with God?

Comments

1. What does “*home*” mean to you?

Home is where we belong—where our heart is, where we feel comfortable and are at ease

2. How would you describe heaven?

Heaven is where God is—hence the Kendrick song: *heaven is in my heart*. Because heaven is God’s home, heaven is a place of purity, holiness, glory.

3. Find some Bible verses to support your definition of heaven

In him was life, and that life was the light of men... We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.^{Jn.1:4;14}

Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.^{Heb.11:16}

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.^{Heb.12:22-24}

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.^{Jas.3:17}

But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.^{2Pet.3:13}

Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.^{Ren.3:12-13}

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”^{Ren.21:1-5}

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.^{Rev.21:10-11}

4. How can we be “**heavenly-minded**” AND also be of some earthly use?

Stay balanced—enjoy God but take Him seriously

All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.^{1Pet.5:5-9}

Have a good reputation with outsiders

have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.^{1Tim.3:7}
Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.^{1Thess.4:11-12}

Live lives that encourage others—not discourage them

*For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore **encourage** each other with these words.*^{1Thess.4:16-18}

*But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their **strengthening, encouraging and comfort**. Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies themselves, but the one who prophesies **edifies the church**.*^{1Cor.14:3-4}

5. How can we safeguard against deception?

Recognise that we may be wrong and that we certainly don't have all the answers

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.^{1Jn.1:8-10}

If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.^{Jas.1:26-27}

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.^{Tit.3:3-7}

For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain.^{Tit.1:10-11}

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.^{1Tim.4:1-5}

My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is. So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.^{Col.2:2-8}

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.^{Eph.5:3-7}

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load. Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor. Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.^{Gal.6:1-7}

I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.^{Rom.16:17-19}

6. What was so special about the city of Jerusalem?

City of peace

This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means “king of righteousness”; then also, “king of Salem” means “king of peace.”^{Heb.7:1-2}

Place where Abraham was told to offer his son

Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.”^{Gen.22:2}

Place where plague was stopped

On that day Gad went to David and said to him, “Go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.” ...Araunah said, “Why has my lord the king come to his servant?” “To buy your threshing floor,” David answered, “so I can build an altar to the LORD, that the plague on the people may be stopped.”^{2Sam.24:18-21}

Place where David brought the Ark

Solomon and the whole assembly went to the high place at Gibeon, for God's tent of meeting was there, which Moses the LORD's servant had made in the wilderness. Now David had brought up the ark of God from Kiriath Jearim to the place he had prepared for it, because he had pitched a tent for it in Jerusalem.^{2Chron.1:3-4}

Place where temple was built

Then Solomon began to build the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David. It was on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the place provided by David.^{2Chron.3:1}

Place where Jesus was crucified

Now Jesus was going up to Jerusalem. On the way, he took the Twelve aside and said to them, 'We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!'^{Matt.20:17-19}

In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!^{Lk.13:33}

7. What is the New Jerusalem?

The dwelling place of God with man

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant,^{Heb.12:22-24}

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise. These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother.^{Gal.4:22-25}

8. What does the symbolism of Jerusalem say about our relationship with God?

The penalty for our sins has been paid (*Abraham/Isaac; Temple; Jesus' death*)

We have peace with God through Jesus' righteousness (*Melchizedek King of Righteousness and King of city of Peace*)

We have a permanent home in the city of peace

Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.^{Rev.3:12-13}

02/09/2020

Video: 1Cor.14

Phil.4:10f

Questions

1. Find some Bible verses that explain the Christian meaning of “*faith*”
2. What did Jesus mean by: *However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?*
3. How can we put our hearts at rest when we are troubled? (*Ps.42; Matt.11:28-30; 1Jn.3:18-20*)
4. What would you need to assess if you were doing a “*spiritual health check*”?
5. Is it wrong to thank God for all the good things in our life (like the Pharisee)?
6. What is the difference between praying **at** God and praying **to** God (*Lk.18:11-18*)

Trouble Praying

You said you find it hard to pray; your prayer times empty pass;
The air it feels like granite and the ceiling seems like brass!

You said your prayers don't go beyond the room; that you feel static.
The ceiling! Who told you that God lives inside your attic?

Whoever told had it wrong; misplacing God's true venue:
The truth is, that once invited there, God resides within you

Wee Willie Winkie

Wee Willie Winkie climbs the stairs
Wee Willie Winkie kneels to say his prayers:
Hands together, eyes closed, a bowing of his head
Mumbles words his mother taught him – tumbles into bed.

Wee Willie Winkie never fails to pray
Wee Willie Winkie knows just what to pray
Wee Willie wonders what good the words have done
For he has never prayed a prayer with words that are his own

Gordon Bailey

Comments

1. Find some Bible verses that explain the Christian meaning of “*faith*”

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,^{Rom.3:23}

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for... 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.^{Heb.11:1;6}

It's impossible to please God apart from faith. And why? Because anyone who wants to approach God must believe both that he exists and that he cares enough to respond to those who seek him. By faith, Noah built a ship in the middle of dry land. He was warned about something he couldn't see, and acted on what he was told. The result? His family was saved. His act of faith drew a sharp line between the evil of the unbelieving world and the rightness of the believing world. As a result, Noah became intimate with God.^{Heb.11:6-7}

Everything that does not come from faith is sin.^{Rom.14:23}

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints—the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.^{Col.1:3-8}

We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.^{2Thess.1:3-4}

2. **What did Jesus mean by:** *However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?*

It was a rhetorical question but faith is not what the religious people thought it was—the Christian faith is a personally trust in God that changes the way we think, talk and behave—and leaves us with a clear conscience. Of course there will be faith but not everyone who says they are Believer actually believes.

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn-bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 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!’”^{Matt.7:15-23}

3. **How can we put our hearts at rest when we are troubled?** (Ps.42; Matt.11:29-30; 1Jn.3:18-20)

Ps.42

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”^{2Matt.11:28-30}

Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.^{1Jn.3:18-20}

Faith and conscience (New Life in Christ Steven J. Lawson)

What comfort is brought to our heart when it is washed clean in the new birth! The haunting guilt of sin that condemns us is removed. Our defiled conscience is made pure. Our sin-stained soul is purged. A sense of peace fills our innermost being.

The haunting guilt of sin is purged from the convicted conscience. The condemnation of God that always accompanies sin is washed away. The believer is no longer enslaved to guilt and shame from sin but freed to obey God from the heart. This purifying from sin is symbolized in water baptism.

Paul makes it clear that when one enters the kingdom, the Spirit cleanses the stained soul of its transgressions. No matter how great the sin in a person's life, the purging power of the Holy Spirit is far greater. The Spirit is able to wash away all guilt. There is no sin so great that the grace of God is not able to scrub it clean.

Every person has a conscience, which is a divinely given warning device. This internal alarm system bears witness to the soul of its condition. When we have sinned, our conscience accuses us. But the new birth cleanses the guilty conscience of wrong. The author of Hebrews explains, "*Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water*".^{Heb.10:22} This washing by the Holy Spirit removes the inward sense of condemnation from the guilty soul.

Certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work—which is by faith. The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk. They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.^{1Tim.1:3-7}

Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith.^{1Tim.1:18-19}

Deacons They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.^{1Tim.3:9}

let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.^{Heb.10:22-25}

4. What would you need to assess if you were doing a “spiritual health check”?

Faith speaks but unbelief is silent

Zechariah asked the angel, “How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.” The angel answered, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time.”^{Lk.1:18-20}

It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence. All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.^{2Cor.4:13-15 (Ps.116:10)}

For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you. Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test? And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test. Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong. Not that people will see that we have stood the test but that you will do what is right even though we may seem to have failed.^{2Cor.13:4-7}

5. Is it wrong to thank God for all the good things in our life (like the Pharisee)?

No! But life does not consist of things!

Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”^{Lk.12:15}

“Surely he will have no respite from his craving; he cannot save himself by his treasure.”^{Job.20:20}

‘If I have put my trust in gold or said to pure gold, ‘You are my security,’ if I have rejoiced over my great wealth, the fortune my hands had gained, if I have regarded the sun in its radiance or the moon moving in splendour, so that my heart was secretly enticed and my hand offered them a kiss of homage, then these also would be sins to be judged, for I would have been unfaithful to God on high.’^{Job.31:24-28}

Though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them.^{Ps.62:10}

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people 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.^{1Tim.6:6-10}

6. What is the difference between praying at God and praying to God (Lk.18:11-18)

Prayer can be just speaking into the air! We must be careful that we are praying to God and not about our self.

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.^{1Cor.10:11-13}

Now, brothers, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction? Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the flute or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me. So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church. For this reason anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind. If you are praising God with your spirit, how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say “Amen” to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying? You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified. I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.^{1Cor.14:6-}

19

26/08/2020

Video: Bible purpose and Sun moon stars

(Lk.21:25 cf Dan.7:13)

Phil.4:1-9

Questions.

We are unprofitable servants: we have only done our duty.^{Lk.17:10}

1. What is our duty (obligation) to God?
2. What work does God expect of us?
3. What is the difference between faith and wishful thinking?
4. Do you have enough faith to speak to Mulberry tree or mountain in our life?
5. Can you have faith in God and unforgiveness toward others at the same time? (*see Mk.11:22-25*)
6. How do you think you can grow your faith?
7. What is laid up for those who do fulfil their duty toward God?

Comments.

1. What is our duty (obligation) to God?

Our obligation to God is to love (worship) Him above all else

Greatest commandment: *“Of all the commandments, which is the most important? “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”*^{Mk.11:28-31}

Salt was added to the sacrifices to show that we have obligation to God: *‘Every grain offering you bring to the LORD must be made without yeast, for you are not to burn any yeast or honey in an offering made to the LORD by fire. You may bring them to the LORD as an offering of the firstfruits, but they are not to be offered on the altar as a pleasing aroma. Season all your grain offerings with salt. Do not leave the salt of the covenant of your God out of your grain offerings; add salt to all your offerings.’*^{Lev.2:11-13}

Now since we are under obligation to the palace [Now because we eat the salt of the palace] and it is not proper for us to see the king dishonoured,^{Ezra.4:14}

We have an obligation to live according to our new righteous nature

(we are born again for an incorruptible seed: *For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.*^{1Pet.1:23})

Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. 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.8:12-17}

2. What work does God expect of us?

Our main work is to believe Him (to trust Him in our daily life)

The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.^{Jn.6:29}

3. What is the difference between faith and wishful thinking?

Wishful thinking is a wish—an uncertain hope. Faith is a certainty and based on God—who God is and what He has said (and done).

The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It's our handle on what we can't see. The act of faith is what distinguished our ancestors, set them above the crowd. By faith, we see the world called into existence by God's word, what we see created by what we don't see. By an act of faith, Abel brought a better sacrifice to God than Cain. It was what he believed, not what he brought, that made the difference. That's what God noticed and approved as righteous. After all these centuries, that belief continues to catch our notice.^{Heb.11:1-4}

I will bow down toward your holy temple and will praise your name for your love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word. When I called, you answered me; you made me bold and stouthearted.^{Ps.138:2-3}

Although faith is the substance of what is hoped for, this hope is certain:

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Saviour and of Christ Jesus our hope,^{1Tim.1:1}

God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.^{Heb.6:10-12}

God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.^{Heb.6:18-20}

4. Do you have enough faith to speak to Mulberry tree or mountain in our life?

We don't need "enough" faith—we just need to exercise the little faith we have.

Either we trust God or we don't Everything that does not come from faith is sin.^{Rom.14:23}

The answer to our worry is to put our trust in God^{Ps.42} and confess that Jesus is Lord.^{Rom.10:10f}

5. Can you have faith in God and unforgiveness toward others at the same time?

No, not living, growing faith.

We will still get to heaven (because we are saved by grace but we won't be living in heaven's atmosphere here on earth.

"Have faith in God," Jesus answered. "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."^{Mk.11:22-25}

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.^{Matt.6:14-15}

6. How do you think you can grow your faith?

Prayer and Bible Study in the context of other Believers—that is what "**Church**" is!

But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.^{Jude.1:20-21}

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.^{Col.2:6-8}

He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.^{1Thess.5:10-11}

7. What is laid up for those who do fulfil their duty toward God?

Crown of Righteousness

Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.^{2Tim.4:8}

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.^{1Pet.1:3-5}

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people—the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace.^{Col.1:3-6}

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.^{Rev.2:7}

Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.^{Rev.2:10-11}

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.^{Rev.2:17}

To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations—He will rule them with an iron sceptre; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'—just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.^{Rev.2:26-29}

He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.^{Rev.3:5-6}

Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.^{Rev.3:12-12}

To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.^{Rev.3:21-22}

19/08/2020

Video: *Esther 10 and Explanation*

Phil.3:12-4:1

Questions.

When life is over, you will be welcomed into an eternal home. ^{Lk.16:9}

8. What is the difference between a parable and a fable?
9. What can we do to plan for our spiritual future?
10. What sort of welcome to his eternal home did the poor man Lazarus have (Lk.16:22)?
11. What sort of welcome to his eternal home did the poor man Lazarus have (Lk.16:22)?
12. What sort of welcome to his eternal home did Stephen have (Acts.7:54-60)?
13. How can we be sure what kind of welcome we will have to our eternal home?

Comments.

1. What is the difference between a parable and a fable?

The word “*parable*” literally means *the placing of one thing beside another with a view to comparison*. Jesus used ideas and events that people could identify with—although not necessarily actual historical events—for His parables. The Biblical parables have a spiritual application not just a moral application.

Fables are often fanciful and unnatural (c.f. Aesop’s fables) and so are obviously not true to life. However, there are fables (allegories) in the Bible—but the inspired Scriptures never uses magic or occult to illustrate truth (unlike the Apocrypha).

A thistle in Lebanon sent a message to a cedar in Lebanon, ‘Give your daughter to my son in marriage.’ Then a wild beast in Lebanon came along and trampled the thistle underfoot. ^{2Kng.14}

The word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, set forth an allegory and tell the house of Israel a parable. Say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: A great eagle with powerful wings, long feathers and full plumage of varied colours came to Lebanon. Taking hold of the top of a cedar, he broke off its topmost shoot and carried it away to a land of merchants, where he planted it in a city of traders.’” ^{Ezek.17:1-4}

2. What can we do to plan for our spiritual future?

Take Jesus’ advice seriously!

Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” ^{Jn.3:3}

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. ^{Jn.3:18}

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” ^{Jn.14:6}

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. ^{Mk.16:16}

One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” ^{Matt.22:35-40}

3. What sort of welcome to his eternal home did the rich man have (Lk.16:22)?

The rich man also died and was buried... I am in agony in this fire... Let him warn [my brothers], so that they will not also come to this place of torment. ^{Lk.16:22;25;27}

4. What sort of welcome to his eternal home did the poor man Lazarus have (Lk.16:22)?

“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side... now he is comforted here.”^{Lk.16:22;25}

5. What sort of welcome to his eternal home did Stephen have (Acts.7:54-60)?

When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” ...While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep. Acts 8:54-60

6. How can we be sure what kind of welcome we will have to our eternal home?

So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted [steward] with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust [steward] must prove faithful.^{1Cor.4:1-2}

The Lord answered, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager [steward], whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.”^{Lk.12:42-44}

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. [As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.]^{1Pet.4:8-10}

An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work [as a steward of God], he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.^{Tit.1:6-9}

Stay faithful—consistent and full of faith

The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’ His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!’^{Matt.25:20-21}

Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, ‘Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn't plant and gathering crops you didn't cultivate. I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back.’ But the master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn't plant and gathered crops I didn't cultivate, why didn't you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.’ Then he ordered, ‘Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one with the ten bags of silver. To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’^{Matt.25:24-30}

12/08/2020

Video: *Hezekiah and Manasseh*

Phil.3:1-11

Questions.

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.^{Lk.19:10}

There is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who do not need to repent.^{Lk.15:1-7}

7. What do think Jesus meant by “lost”?
8. How does Jesus seek and save us?
9. In what way is Jesus like a Shepherd?
10. Who do you think are the “99” people?
11. How would you describe heaven?
12. What should our attitude be towards others, including the Government? (*see Matt.18:21-35; Rom12:10; Rom.13; Phil.2:3; Tit.3:1; 1Pet.2:13-17*)
13. How will our attitude affect our behaviour?

Comments.

1. What do think Jesus meant by “lost”?

Primarily lost spiritually—but that leads on to every other kind of lost

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep.”^{Matt.10:5-10}

He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”^{Matt.15:24}

Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”^{Lk.19:9-10}

While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.^{Jn.17:12}

Jesus answered, “I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go.” This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: “I have not lost one of those you gave me.”^{Jn.18:8}

2. How does Jesus seek and save us?

During His ministry on earth Jesus sought people out with a general physically sought people out—either directly or positionally like Nichodemus (Jn.3), Woman at the Well (Jn.4), Zacchaeus (Lk.19), etc.

Blind man Healed Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”^{Jn.9:35}

Now, Jesus seeks us out by the Holy Spirit

And Isaiah boldly says, “I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.”^{Rom.10:20}

For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.^{2Chron.16:9}

The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD is on his heavenly throne. He observes everyone on earth; his eyes examine them. The LORD examines the righteous, but the wicked, those who love violence, he hates with a passion.^{Ps.11:4-5}

I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Pressing on Toward the Goal Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.^{Phil.3:9-14}

For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”^{2Cor.4:6}

3. In what way is Jesus like a Shepherd?

Care, lead, protect guide cf Ps.23 Jn.10

4. Who do you think that the “99 righteous people” are?

The self-righteous who don't think that they need to repent

On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”^{Matt.9:12-13}

For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.^{Matt.5:20}

Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow. Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.^{Col.2:18-23}

The Lord says: “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught.”^{Is.29:13}

You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.’^{Matt.15:7-9}

Therefore rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the merely human commands of those who reject the truth.*^{Tit.1:13-14}

However, the hardest people to reach with the gospel are those who falsely presume they have a right relationship with God. These individuals are often highly moral in their personal life. Perhaps they are a notably respected religious leader or a kind, merciful philanthropist. Perhaps they are an active servant in their church or community or give time in helping others. They may even give their financial resources to charitable causes. But having such a devout life blinds these people to their true need. They never see that they must be born again. People who have a fine, upstanding status in religious circles most often assume the message of salvation is always for someone else. In their eyes, the gospel is for the abusive spouse and the delinquent parent.

They suppose that the grace of God is for those who have committed a gross crime. True as this is, they never see that the gospel is for them. They assume nonreligious people are the only ones who need a new start with God. But they are oblivious to their own spiritual need. This lack of self-awareness makes them the hardest people to reach with the gospel. They fail to understand that they need the new birth as much as anyone else. Their problem is not that they think they are too sinful to be saved. The very opposite is the case—they presume they are too good to need a new life with God. *New Life in Christ*

5. How would you describe heaven?

Heaven in the Bible sometimes refers to the sky, the atmosphere or outer space but in the NT usually it means the place where God dwells. The phrase **heaven and earth** usually refers to **the Covenantal order**, the relationship between God and man.

The Old Covenant passed away thus fulfilling the words of Christ in Matthew 5:18.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. ^{Lk.21:33}

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. ^{Matt.5:17-20}

One day even the New Covenant will be superseded by ultimate perfection. This may also coincide with a literal new heaven and earth called the New Jerusalem

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them." ^{Rev.21:1-3.}

6. What should our attitude be towards others, including the Government? (see Matt.18:21-35; Rom12:10; Rom.13; Phil.2:3; Tit.3:1; 1Pet.2:13-17)

Obey Government unless it conflicts with our theological conscience

Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." ^{Acts.4:18-20}

Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings!" ^{Acts.5:29}

The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, "When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live." The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live. Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, "Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?" The midwives answered Pharaoh, "Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive." So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own." ^{Ex.1:15-21}

7. How will our attitude affect our behaviour?

*Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.'*²*Matt. 18:32-35*

*But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.'*¹*Lk. 19:8*

05/08/2020

Phil.1:27-30

Video Philipians 2

Ministry of Excuses

Questions.

1. What Bible references do you think best summarise God's Kingdom?
2. How is the Kingdom of God that Jesus spoke about different from the Kingdom of Israel?
3. Who is invited to enter God's Kingdom?
4. How can you enter God's Kingdom?
5. Were the explanations as to why people wouldn't come to the Banquet in Lk.14 reasons or excuses? Explain
6. Why do you think Moses made his excuses (Ex.3-4)?
7. Why do you think that Isaiah so quick to say he would obey God's call (Is.6:1-8)?

Comments

1. What Bible references do you think best summarise God's Kingdom?

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ^{Rom.14:17}

2. How is the Kingdom of God that Jesus spoke about different from the Kingdom of Israel?

The Kingdom of Israel was the domain of the kings of Israel and included the geographical land bequeathed to Abraham:

The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." ...and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there. Abram travelled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." ^{Gen.12:1-7}

The Kingdom of God that Jesus spoke about is the domain of the King of kings. It is a spiritual kingdom in peoples' hearts where Jesus is Lord

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven... Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ^{Matt.5:3;10}

Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." ^{Jn.3:3}

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

3. Who is invited to enter God's Kingdom?

Whoever is hungry for God may come

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. ^{Rev.22:17}

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." ^{Jn.4:10}

On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.^{Jn.7:37-39}

There is a difference between being invited and actually coming

Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.'... Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. He asked, 'How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?' The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' **For many are invited, but few are chosen.**^{Matt.22:1-14}

All are invited but few respond. If someone's heart is hard, they may hear but won't respond.

To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them. That is why I use these parables, For they look, but they don't really see. They hear, but they don't really listen or understand.^{Matt.13:12-13}

4. How can you enter God's Kingdom?

New Birth

Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.^{Jn.3:5}

Simply and by faith

Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.^{Mk.10:15}

Doing God's will

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.^{Matt.7:21}

With hardships

They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.^{Acts.14:21-22}

5. Were the explanations as to why people wouldn't come to the Banquet in Lk.14 reasons or excuses? Explain

Excuses

Although each excuse was a legitimate activity, they could have seen to their new acquisitions AND gone to the Wedding Banquet. With a very few exceptions, we can always make time for what we want to do.

6. Why do you think Moses made his excuses (Ex.3-4)?

He was frightened to return to Egypt.

7. Why do you think that Isaiah so quick to say he would obey God's call (Is.6:1-8)?

Isaiah knew his sins were forgiven and so there was no barrier between him and God

See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.^{Is.6:7}

“Come now, let us settle the matter,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”^{Is.1:18}

The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God you fear everything else. - *Oswald Chambers*

Our evangelical culture tends to take the awesome reality of a transcendent God who is worthy to be feared, and downsize Him so He could fit into our "buddy system." The way we talk about Him, the way we pray, and, more strikingly, the way we live, shows that we have somehow lost our sense of being appropriately awestruck in the presence of a holy and all-powerful God. It's been a long time since we've heard a good sermon on the "fear of God." If God were to show up visibly, many of us think we'd run up to Him and high-five Him for the good things He has done. - *Joseph M. Stowell*

When people no longer fear God, they transgress His laws without hesitation. The fear of consequences is no deterrent when the fear of God is gone. - *A.W. Tozer*

People used to blush when they were ashamed. Now they are ashamed if they blush. Modesty has disappeared and a brazen generation with no fear of God before its eyes, mocks at sin. We are so fond of being called tolerant and broadminded that we wink at sin when we ought to weep. - *Vance Havner*

Faith does not replace fear; it puts fear in its proper place. No one goes through life without experiencing fear, but people who fear God (and trust in Him) handle the threats and challenges of life much differently from those crippled by fear or filled with false confidence. - *Today In The Word*

Fear knocked at the door. Faith answered. There was no one there. - *Author Unknown*

29/07/2020

Make every effort to enter through the narrow door.^{Lk.13:24}

Video: How Jesus Taught Us To Die Well

Questions.

1. What Bible reference do you think best summarises the value of a human life?
2. How was Jesus' death on the cross different from the other people who were crucified?
3. What changed spiritually to you when you became a Christian?
4. Have you changed in other ways since you became a Christian?
5. What is the difference between working hard and hard work (especially in our Christian life)?
6. How did Jesus refresh Himself when He was tired (c.f. Jn.4:31-38)?
7. What will refresh us when we are tired (c.f. Jn.6:21-40; Is.61)?
8. What is your favourite cameo from the Broad and Narrow Way Picture?
9. How could you use that illustration to explain the way of salvation?

Comments.

1. What Bible reference do you think best summarises the value of a human life?

No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him—the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough.^{Ps.49:7-8}

The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.^{Matt.20:28}

What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?^{Matt.16:26}

2. How was Jesus' death on the cross different from the other people who were crucified?

Jesus died for our sins and took on the punishment for our sin. So, Jesus not only suffered physical pain of dying by crucifixion but He also suffered the pain of our punishment as well. *Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*^{Is.53:4-6} *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness.*^{1Pet.2:24}

3. What changed spiritually to you when you became a Christian?

We experienced the greatest of all miracles—a spiritual heart transplant

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.^{Ezek.36:26-27}

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them.^{2Cor.5:17-19}

We were given new life in Christ

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.^{Rom.6:4}

“Go, stand in the temple courts,” the angel said, “and tell the people all about this new life.”^{Acts.5:20}

4. Have you changed in other ways since you became a Christian?

Renewed minds: *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*^{Rom.12:1-2}

Freedom and glory: *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*^{2Cor.3:17-18}

5. What is the difference between working hard and hard work (especially in our Christian life)?

Sweat and toil! *So I am putting a curse on the ground because of what you did. All the days of your life you will have to work hard to get food from the ground. You will eat the plants of the field, even though the ground produces thorns and thistles. You will have to work hard and sweat a lot to produce the food you eat. You were made out of the ground. And you will return to it. You are dust. So you will return to it.*^{Gen.3:17-19}

But this curse has been removed through Jesus' death on the cross: *Christ set us free from the curse of the law. He did it by becoming a curse for us. It is written, "Everyone who is hung on a pole is under God's curse."*^{Gal.3:13}

Our spiritual work of serving God is a joy

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.^{1Pet.4:10-11}

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.^{1Pet.5:2-4}

Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.^{Heb.13:7}

6. How did Jesus refresh Himself when He was tired (c.f. Jn.4:31-38)?

By sharing the Good News:

"I have food to eat that you know nothing about." Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?" "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."^{Jn.4:32-38}

7. What will refresh us when we are tired (c.f. Jn.6:21-40; Is.61)?

Believing (trusting) in Jesus, God's Son: *"Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."*^{Jn.6:26-29}

Freedom from sin: *The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the*

captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.^{Is.61:1-3}

8. What is your favourite cameo from the Broad and Narrow Way Picture?

Prodigal son

9. How could you use that illustration to explain the way of salvation?

The Prodigal son was still able to return to his Father's house—although he was a long way off, he wasn't beyond redemption and eventually came home

22/07/2020

Video: *How Jesus Taught Us To Die Well*

Questions

Be dressed and ready for service.^{Lk.12:35}

1. **Can you find anyone who wore “spiritual clothes” in the Bible?**
2. **What are the “spiritual clothes” that we are to wear now?**
3. **What clothes will people wear in heaven?**
4. **What is the “service” that we are to dress for?**
5. **What does “living by faith” mean (see: Gal.2:20)**
6. **If God has forgiven all our sins, will God still judge us?**

Mike Petzer’s book “The Miracle of Judgment” available from the Church Office or download it from our website under What we teach/Resources or use this link:

<http://www.dealpentecostal.co.uk/Miracle%20of%20Judgement.pdf>

Comments

1. **Can you find anyone who wore “spiritual clothes” in the Bible?**

Adam and Eve: They were “naked” before God because they had lost their spiritual clothes. Jewish tradition says they were clothed in God’s glory until they sinned.

Jesus:

Gird your sword upon your side, O mighty one; clothe yourself with splendour and majesty. In your majesty ride forth victoriously in behalf of truth, humility and righteousness; let your right hand display awesome deeds.^{Ps.45:3-4}

at the Transfiguration, Jesus’ clothes had changed. After Jesus’ resurrection, His physical clothes were still in the grave but He was wearing clothes—spiritual clothes

Moses and Elijah were with Jesus at the Transfiguration—and clothed

Samuel was clothed when he was seen after his death

The woman said, “I see a spirit coming up out of the ground.” “What does he look like?” he asked. “An old man wearing a robe is coming up,” she said. Then Saul knew it was Samuel, and he bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. Samuel said to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?”^{1Sam.28:13-15}

Angels are depicted as dressed

Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues. They were dressed in clean, shining linen and wore golden sashes around their chests.^{Rev.15:6}

2. **What are the “spiritual clothes” that we are to wear now?**

Jesus Christ

The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.^{Rom.13:12-14}

Jesus’ Attributes

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.^{Eph.4:22-24}

But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.^{Col.3:8}

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.^{Col.3:12}

Salvation

Now arise, O LORD God, and come to your resting place, you and the ark of your might. May your priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, may your saints rejoice in your goodness.^{2Chron.6:41}

White or linen clothes (which is our righteousness)

You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.^{Rev.3:17-18}

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.)^{Rev.19:7-8}

Righteousness

Let us go to his dwelling place; let us worship at his footstool—arise, O LORD, and come to your resting place, you and the ark of your might. May your priests be clothed with righteousness; may your saints sing for joy.^{Ps.132:7-9}

I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness.^{Is.61:10}

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.^{Col.3:12-14}

Then I, Daniel, looked, and there before me stood two others, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank. One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?" The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven,^{Dan.12:5-7}

Splendour

Awake, awake, O Zion, clothe yourself with strength. Put on your garments of splendour, O Jerusalem, the holy city.^{Is.52:1}

Spiritual Armour (which is our salvation)

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.^{Eph.6:10-15}

3. What clothes will people wear in heaven?

Glory

Note: White = Righteous. White robes = Heavenly bodies for the redeemed which precede resurrected bodies

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.^{Rev.6:9-11}

4. **What is the “service” that we are to dress for?**

Service is waiting on God; doing what He has asked us to do

Armour is for battle—but our war is not **against** the devil but **for** our faith

Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.^{Jude.3-4}
This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.^{1Jn.5:3-5}

5. **What does “living by faith” mean**

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.^{Gal.2:20}

Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.^{2Cor.5:6-10}

So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very little while, “He who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.” But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.^{Heb.10:35-39}

Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, “The righteous will live by faith.” The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, “The man who does these things will live by them.”^{Gal.3:11-12}

For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”^{Rom1:17}

I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint. Then the LORD replied: “Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay. “See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright—but the righteous will live by his faith—indeed, wine betrays him; he is arrogant and never at rest. Because he is as greedy as the grave and like death is never satisfied, he gathers to himself all the nations and takes captive all the peoples.^{Hab.2:1-5}

6. **If God has forgiven all our sins, will God still judge us?**

We will be judged for what we have done but only those who do not believe in Jesus will be condemned

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.^{Jn.3:17-19}

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.^{Rev.20:11-15}

(see also Jn.5 about 2 resurrections)

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.' He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.^{Matt.25:}

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.^{1Cor.3:10-15}

15/07/2020

What do you think of yourself? Do you have—low self-esteem, haughty self-esteem, or godly self-esteem? *You are worth more than a sparrow.*^{Lk.12:7}

Video: Rom12 Marks of a Christian

Questions

7. **How would you define beauty?**
8. **How did the OT women make themselves beautiful?** (see 1Pet.3:1-6)
9. **How does God describe us?** (see Eccl.3:11)
10. **With Jesus as our role model, what should our attitude be like?** (see Phil.2:1-5)
11. **How can we change our attitude?**
12. **What role does the Holy Spirit have in our change?**
13. **What role do we have in our change?**
14. **How can we protect ourselves from wrong influences?**

Comments

1. **How would you define beauty?**

Beauty is an inner quality that shows through our personality

2. **How did the OT women make themselves beautiful?** (see 1Pet.3:1-6)

A gentle and quiet spirit—this is an attitude of submission.

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.^{1Pet.3:1-6}

Jesus submitted to His Father

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.^{Heb.5:7-10}

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.^{1Pet.2:21-23}

Our beauty comes from our attitude of submission to God and to our fellow believers:

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.^{Jas.3:13-18}

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.^{Jas.4:7-10}

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.^{Eph.5:20}

3. How does God describe us? (see Eccl.3:11)

Beautiful

I have seen the burden God has laid on men. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is the gift of God. I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him.^{Eccl.3:10-14}

God created mankind and said they were very good:

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them... God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.^{Gen.1:27-31}

For everything God created is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.^{1Tim.4:4-5}

Not good!

There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.^{Rom.3:10-12}

Clean

“Come now, let us settle the matter,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;”^{Is.1:18}

Righteous

You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.^{1Thes.2:10-12}

Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.^{Rom.10:4}

Holy

To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be [“to be” is not in the Greek] his holy people: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.^{Rom.1:7}

Loved

To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ!^{Id.1}

For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.^{1Thess.1:4-5}

4. With Jesus as our role model, what should our attitude be like? (see Phil.2:1-5)

Our attitude should be like Jesus’—submissive to God and displaying the fruit of the Spirit

*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ...[who] made himself nothing [did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage], taking the very nature of a servant... he **humbled** himself and became **obedient**.*^{Phil.2:5-8}

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death.^{Phil.2:1-8}

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature [flesh]... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.^{Gal.5:16-26}

5. How can we change our attitude?

Spend time in fellowship with God.

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.^{Ps.91:1}

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect [or contemplate] the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.^{2Cor.3:18-4:1}

When I tried to understand all this, it troubled me deeply **till I entered the sanctuary of God;** then I understood their final destiny.^{Ps.73:16-17}

6. What role does the Holy Spirit have in the changing of our attitude?

The Holy Spirit initiates and inspires us:

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.^{Jn.1:12-13}

Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.^{Rom.8:14}

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.^{Gal.5:16-18}

7. What role do we have in the changing of our attitude?

We have to choose to obey the Holy Spirit's leading.

Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.^{Rom.8:5-9}

He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior.^{Tit.3:5-6}

This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life.^{Deut.30:19-20}

Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection." So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs." Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.^{Acts.1:21-26}

Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.^{Ps.42:5/11;43:5}

8. How can we protect ourselves from wrong influences?

Keep godly company and avoid ungodly company—we minister to darkness but fellowship with the light.

Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.” Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.^{1Cor.15:33-34}

Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared.^{Pron.22:24-25}

Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.^{1Cor.6:9-11}

Blessed are the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.^{Ps.1:1-3}

However, we should not cut ourselves off from the world. We should cut ourselves off from the **values** of the world and from those who **profess** to be Christians **but live like the world**.

In my letter to you I told you not to associate with people who continue to commit sexual sins. I didn't tell you that you could not have any contact with unbelievers who commit sexual sins, are greedy, are dishonest, or worship false gods. If that were the case, you would have to leave this world. Now, what I meant was that you should not associate with people who call themselves brothers or sisters in the Christian faith but live in sexual sin, are greedy, worship false gods, use abusive language, get drunk, or are dishonest. Don't eat with such people.^{1Cor.5:9-}

08/07/2020

Video: Solomon Temple build 1King8

To be like Jesus

Ps.122

Questions

1. What are some of God's characteristics that are mentioned in the Bible?
2. What are some of Jesus' characteristics that are mentioned in the Bible?
3. Who could be a priest under the Old Covenant?
4. What was the role of a priest under the Old Covenant?
5. Who can be a priest under the New Covenant?
6. What is the role of a priest under the New Covenant?
7. What sacrifices do we bring to God under the New Covenant?
8. What does it mean to be blessed?
9. How can we bless others?

Comments

1. What are some of God's characteristics that are mentioned in the Bible?

God's characteristics could be called His "*personality traits*".

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbour his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;^{Ps.103:8-11}

Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.^{Mic.7:18-19}

But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.^{Ps.86:15}

It was in the year King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. Attending him were mighty seraphim, each having six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. They were calling out to each other, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Heaven's Armies! The whole earth is filled with his glory!"^{Is.6:1-3}

Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?^{Gen.18:25}

When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, "He is good; his love endures forever."^{2Chron.7:3}

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.^{Ps.107:1}

But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."^{1Pet.1:15-16}

2. What are some of Jesus' characteristics that are mentioned in the Bible?

Jesus' characteristics (or personality traits) are the same as God the Father's:

Jesus said: *Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.*^{Jn.14:9}

No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.^{Jn.1:18}

Jesus withdrew from that place. Many followed him, and he healed all their sick, warning them not to tell who he was. This was to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a

smouldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. In his name the nations will put their hope.^{12Matt.12:15-21}

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.^{Phil.2:5-11}

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.^{1Pet.2:21-23}

Jesus was totally God,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.^{Jn.1:1-2}

Jesus was also totally human

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.^{Jn.1:14}

And so we are able to have His characteristics (personality traits).

I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.^{Jn.13:15-17}

Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.^{1Pet.2:21-23}

3. Who could be a priest under the Old Covenant?

Only descendants from the tribe of Levi could assist in the Temple and only descendants of Aaron (who was from the tribe of Levi) **could be priests.**

The LORD said to Aaron, “You, your sons and your family are to bear the responsibility for offenses connected with the sanctuary, and you and your sons alone are to bear the responsibility for offenses connected with the priesthood. Bring your fellow Levites from your ancestral tribe to join you and assist you when you and your sons minister before the tent of the covenant law. They are to be responsible to you and are to perform all the duties of the tent, but they must not go near the furnishings of the sanctuary or the altar. Otherwise both they and you will die. They are to join you and be responsible for the care of the tent of meeting—all the work at the tent—and no one else may come near where you are.”^{Nu.18:1-4}

*But didn't you drive out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and make priests of your own as the peoples of other lands do? Whoever comes to consecrate himself with a young bull and seven rams may become a priest of what are not gods. As for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him. **The priests who serve the LORD are sons of Aaron, and the Levites assist them.***^{2Chron.13:9-10}

*But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the LORD his God, and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. Azariah the priest with eighty other courageous priests of the LORD followed him in. They confronted him and said, “It is not right for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD. **That is for the priests, the descendants of Aaron, who***

have been consecrated to burn incense. Leave the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful; and you will not be honoured by the LORD God.”^{2Chron.26:16-18}

4. What was the role of a priest under the Old Covenant?

To represent God to the people and offer worship to God

Make sacred clothes for your brother Aaron and his sons. Then they will serve me as priests.^{Ex.28:4}

The priests who serve the LORD are sons of Aaron, and the Levites assist them. Every morning and evening they present burnt offerings and fragrant incense to the LORD. They set out the bread on the ceremonially clean table and light the lamps on the gold lampstand every evening. We are observing the requirements of the LORD our God.^{2Chron.13:10-11}

But the priests had to be ceremonially clean (holy):

Hezekiah sent word to all Israel and Judah and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, inviting them to come to the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel. The king and his officials and the whole assembly in Jerusalem decided to celebrate the Passover in the second month. They had not been able to celebrate it at the regular time because not enough priests had consecrated themselves and the people had not assembled in Jerusalem. The plan seemed right both to the king and to the whole assembly.^{2Chron.30:1-4}

5. Who can be a priest under the New Covenant?

When the priesthood changed the law (covenant) had to change.

Suppose the Levites who were priests could have made people perfect. The law was given to the people so they could become perfect through the priests. Then why was there still a need for another priest to come? And why did he need to be like Melchizedek? Why wasn't he from Aaron's family line? A change of priests requires a change of law. Those things are said about one who is from a different tribe. No one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. It is clear that our Lord came from the family line of Judah. Moses said nothing about priests who were from that tribe. But suppose another priest like Melchizedek appears. Then what we have said is even more clear. He has not become a priest because of a rule about his family line. He has become a priest because of his powerful life. His life can never be destroyed. Scripture says, “You are a priest forever, just like Melchizedek.” The old rule is done away with. It was weak and useless. The law didn't make anything perfect. Now a better hope has been given to us. That hope brings us near to God.^{Heb.7:11-19}

When Jesus became a Priest of the order of Melchizedek, God had to change the Covenant—and so the old order with its temple and priesthood has gone forever.

By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.^{Heb.8:13}

So now, under the New Covenant, all Believers are priests—we are a nation of Priests:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.^{1Pet.2:9-10}

The priests in God’s Kingdom are those who are freed from their sins because they have been purchased by Jesus’ blood (i.e. His death and resurrection):

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.^{Rev.1:5-6}

And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”^{Rev.5:8-10}

6. What is the role of a priest under the New Covenant?

To represent God to the people and offer worship to God.

I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.^{Rom.15:15-16}

7. What sacrifices do we bring to God under the New Covenant?

The sacrifices we bring to God are sacrifices of worship—which is obedience and praise

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.^{Heb.13:15-16}

Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to him: “Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips.”^{Hos.14:2}

8. What does it mean to be blessed?

The greatest blessing is to know that our sins are forgiven

David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.”^{Rom.4:6-8}

9. How can we bless others?

By being like Jesus and communicating the Gospel to them through our attitude, through what we say and through what we do.

Only God can bless—it is through the seed (not seeds) of Abraham that the world is blessed: *The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ... But Scripture announces that the whole world is a prisoner because of sin. It does so in order that what was promised might be given to those who believe. The promise comes through faith in Jesus Christ.*^{Gal.3:16;22}

But as God’s representatives, we can bless others

This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him.^{Heb.7:1}

And without doubt the lesser is blessed by the greater.^{Heb.7:7}

Then Joseph brought his father Jacob in and presented him before Pharaoh. After Jacob blessed Pharaoh...

Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went out from his presence.^{Gen.47:7-10}

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.^{Heb.11:20-21}

And like the OT priests, we can invoke God’s blessing on others by putting God’s Name on them.

The LORD said to Moses: Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.” So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.’^{Nu.6:22-27}

01/07/2020

Questions to God or Questioning God?

Questions:

1. Find some of the questions that people in the Bible asked God?
2. What is the difference between asking God a question and questioning God?
3. Do you think it is a lack of faith to ask God questions?
4. How will God answer your questions?
5. How can we remain faithful—both faithful (reliable) and faithful (full of faith)?
6. Have you asked God this question: *What would you have me do to help others in this trying time Lord?*"

Comments

1. Find some of the questions that people in the Bible asked God?

Moses returned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all."^{Ex.5:22-23}

But Moses said to the LORD, "If the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me, since I speak with faltering lips?"^{Ex.6:12}

Moses was troubled. He asked the LORD, "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their forefathers? Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, 'Give us meat to eat!' I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now—if I have found favour in your eyes—and do not let me face my own ruin."^{Ex.11:10-15}

Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb? Why were there knees to receive me and breasts that I might be nursed? For now I would be lying down in peace; I would be asleep and at rest."^{Job.3:11-13}

I despise my life; I would not live forever. Let me alone; my days have no meaning. 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? Will you never look away from me, or let me alone even for an instant? If I have sinned, what have I done to you, O watcher of men? Why have you made me your target? Have I become a burden to you? Why do you not pardon my offenses and forgive my sins? For I will soon lie down in the dust; you will search for me, but I will be no more."^{Job.7:16-21}

Why, O LORD, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?"^{Psa.10:1}

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent."^{Psa.22:1-2}

One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?" But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?"^{Rom.9:19-21}

2. What is the difference between asking God a question and questioning God?

To ask God a question is part of normal communication but to question God shows that there is no trust—actually it is an act of rebellion against God. When we became a Christian, we confessed "Jesus is Lord"^{Rom.10:8-13;1Cor.12:3} That is another way of saying that Jesus is our Master and we trust Him completely.

But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'"^{Rom.9:20}

I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God... Woe to those who quarrel with their Maker, those who are nothing but potsherds among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?' Does your work say, 'The potter has no hands'? Woe to the one who says to a father, 'What have you begotten?' or to a mother, 'What have you brought to birth?'^{Is.45:5-10}

to hide their plans from the LORD, who do their work in darkness and think, "Who sees us? Who will know?" You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, "He did not make me"? Can the pot say of the potter, "He knows nothing"?^{Is.29:15-16}

When Eve questioned God's instruction, it led to her sinning and becoming separated from God.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'? The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves."^{Gen.3:1-7}

We need to watch what we say and not allow our **questions to God** to become **questioning of God**.

They say, "How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?" This is what the wicked are like—always carefree, they increase in wealth. Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence. All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning. If I had said, "I will speak thus," I would have betrayed your children. When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny."^{Ps.73:11-17}

Then Job answered the LORD: "I am unworthy—how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth. I spoke once, but I have no answer—twice, but I will say no more." Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm: "Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself?"^{Job.40:3-8}

3. Do you think it is a lack of faith to ask God questions?

If we can't ask God, who can we ask? God rarely answers our questions in the way we expected or that we hoped for. However, we can and should look for the answers in the Scriptures—not for hidden messages but by applying the general principles of God's kingdom to our situation. These basic principles of interpreting Scripture have been used for 2000 years so be very suspicious of any "new" revelation or interpretation, especially when it comes to politics and/or future events and also watch out for recurring heresies, such as Jesus not being divine, Jesus not being the Son of God, Jesus not rising physically from the dead or ascending to the Father, God not judging the world, etc.

George Canty wrote: *My early ministry consisted largely of the whys and wherefores of suffering. Library shelves are full of volumes philosophising on the subject. With a shock, long ago, I saw my intellectualised concerns about the sick had little relevance and anyway the problem was beyond my poor brains. Jesus said "heal the sick!" It never entered my head to ask "Why?" Debating evil has little to do with faith, except knock it flat. We are ministers, not philosophers. Our calling is compassion, prayer, faith and the Word. Our terms, full Gospel or 'Foursquare' meant the proclamation of Jesus as Saviour, Baptiser, King and Healer. (from: "I was just thinking" available from our website).*

4. How will God answer your questions?

God speaks to us by the Holy Spirit and by His Son—predominately through the Scriptures.

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.^{Heb.1:1-2}

Brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus.^{Acts.1:16}

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.^{2Pet.1:20-21}

When we think that God is speaking to us, we must check it with what God has already spoken in the Scriptures—and interpret those Scriptures in the light of Jesus' death resurrection and ascension.

Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.^{Acts.17:11}

No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days and they will prophesy."^{Acts.2:16-18}

God also speaks through circumstances (but again, we must check it with the general principles of NT theology).

But I tell you, in this you are not right, for God is greater than any mortal. Why do you complain to him that he responds to no one's words? For God does speak—now one way, now another—though no one perceives it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on people as they slumber in their beds, he may speak in their ears and terrify them with warnings, to turn them from wrongdoing and keep them from pride, to preserve them from the pit, their lives from perishing by the sword. Or someone may be chastened on a bed of pain with constant distress in their bones, so that their body finds food repulsive and their soul loathes the choicest meal. Their flesh wastes away to nothing, and their bones, once hidden, now stick out. They draw near to the pit, and their life to the messengers of death.^{Job.33:12-22}

God speaks through prayer—in prayer we are listening to God.

God speaks through people—with a prophetic word or practical help

Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.^{2Cor.9:10-13}

Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.^{Phil.4:14-19}

God occasionally speaks through an angel

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."^{Lk.1:34-35}

But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.' So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island."^{Acts.27:22-26}

5. How can we remain faithful—both faithful (reliable) and faithful (full of faith)?

Tragedies come to pass but Eternity is here to stay—we need to see life's bigger picture. Whatever we endure now will be more than compensated in eternity.

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.^{Rom.8:18}

So we must keep doing what God has told us to do—stay in fellowship with God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), His Word (read and meditate on the Scripture) and His people (interact with other Believers in the security of the local Church). Our bodily life in this world is not of ultimate importance—our spiritual life is.

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.^{Matt.10:28-31}

Questions about life's dis-ease, discomfort and uncertainty remain unanswered, but role is to proclaim Jesus Christ and the hope He offers mankind. *I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.*^{2Tim.1:12}

6. Have you asked God this question: *What would you have me do to help others in this trying time Lord?*"

24/06/2020

Give me a sign of Your goodness

Give me a sign of your goodness, that my enemies may see it and be put to shame, for you, O LORD, have helped me and comforted me.^{Ps.86:17}

Questions

1. What evidence for God is there outside, of the Bible?
2. What evidence is there for God and His plan of salvation, in the Bible?
3. When it comes to spiritual matters, how can you discern what is genuine and/or relevant?
4. What does the Bible say about miracles, signs and wonders?
5. What does the Bible say about maturity?
6. What could you do to further develop your Christian faith (help you to mature spiritually)?

Comments

1. What evidence for God is there outside, of the Bible?

Creation—if matter can neither be created or destroyed then the Universe cannot exist without a Creator. There is an order to science (physics, chemistry, maths etc.) that cannot be by chance. Natural science (plant and animal life) shows that there is more to plant and animals than the sum of their chemical make-up. **Conscience** shows that we are more than object—we have a moral compass that cannot be measured by science.

2. What evidence is there for God and His plan of salvation, in the Bible?

Jesus—His life, death and resurrection. **Israel's history** including Abraham and Isaac; Jacob going to Egypt; the Exodus; Moses and the Law; Solomon and the Temple.

3. When it comes to spiritual matters, how can you discern what is genuine and/or relevant?

Stay in fellowship with God, His Word and His people i.e. be a true worshipper.

Know the truth and hold to it with a good conscience.

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'^{Jn.8:31-32}

What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.^{2Tim.1:13-14}

I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit.^{Rom.9:1}

Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people.^{Jude.3}

hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.^{Tit.1:9}

Stay in fellowship with a Bible believing Church, i.e. being an active participating member of the Church family.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.^{Acts.2:42-47}

Be Bible literate i.e. having a working knowledge of the Bible.

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.^{2Tim2:15}

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.^{Acts.17:11}

Share what you believe

I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. [that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.]^{Phil.6}

4. What does the Bible say about miracles, signs and wonders?

Kathryn Kuhlman said: I believe in miracles because I believe in God.

Miracles, signs and wonders were Jesus' credentials.

This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.^{Jn.2:11}

Men of Israel, listen to what I say: Jesus from Nazareth was a man whom God brought to your attention. You know that through this man God worked miracles, did amazing things, and gave signs.^{Acts.2:22}

But to the doubter and unbeliever, no proof of God is ever enough: *Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him.*^{Jn.12:37}

Miracles, signs and wonders are the credentials of an apostle:

I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true apostle, including signs, wonders and miracles.^{2Cor.12:12}

A feeling of fear came over everyone as many amazing things and miraculous signs happened through the apostles.^{Acts.2:23}

Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.^{Acts.2:43}

Miracles, signs and wonders were normal in the early Church:

The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.^{Acts.5:12-16}

Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done—by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.^{Rom.15:17-19}

This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.^{Heb.2:3-4}

Miracles, signs and wonders are token of God's love

Miracles are a means of blessing in themselves especially healing, protection and provision but they are also, as Harold McDougal says, “tokens of God's love”: *God loves us so much that he desires to give us visible signs of His love, something that not only we can see, but something that everyone around us can see as well. He wants to extend to us visible symbols of His favour upon our lives, Tokens of His Love.*

Miracles, signs and wonders are the work of the Holy Spirit in a Christian

The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and

to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."^{Lk.10:18-20}

N.B. Some people perform miracles by evil spirits and some people try to perform miracles in Jesus' Name (and succeed) but are not recognised by God!

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 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!'"^{Matt.7:21-23}

Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is the divine power known as the Great Power." They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic... When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin."^{Acts.8:9-23}

Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out."^{Acts.19:13}

One day as we were going down to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl who had a spirit that enabled her to tell the future. She earned a lot of money for her masters by telling fortunes. She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved." This went on day after day until Paul got so exasperated that he turned and said to the demon within her, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And instantly it left her."^{Acts.16:16-18}

5. What does the Bible say about maturity?

Maturity comes from making the right choices (choosing right over wrong).

But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. [But solid food is for those who are mature and through practice have trained their senses to know the difference between good and evil.]^{Heb.5:14}

Maturity comes through the ministry gifts of the Holy Spirit

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.^{Eph.4:11-14}

6. What could you do to further develop your Christian faith (help you to mature spiritually)?

Worship—which is being in a "secret place" with God.

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."^{Pc.91:1-2}

Worship is also obedience

Then Abraham said to his servants, “You stay here with the donkey while the boy and I go over there. We’ll **worship**. After that we’ll come back to you.” ... “Through your descendant all the nations of the earth will be blessed, **because you have obeyed me**.”^{Gen.22:5;18}

Fellowship—fellowship with God, with His Word and with His people.

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.^{Heb.10:22-25}

Remember what God has done

I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.^{1Cor.4:17}

I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another. I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.^{Rom.15:14-16}

So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.^{2Pet.1:12-15}

Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe.^{Jude.5}

Make Memorials.

So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, and said to them, “Go over before the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.”^{Josh.4:4-7}

Then Samuel got a big stone. He set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer. He said, “The LORD has helped us every step of the way.”^{1Sam.7:12}

Give Testimony to Jesus (not be ashamed of Jesus)

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them!^{Rev.12:11-12}

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.^{Acts.20:24}

I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. On the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit.^{Rev.1:9-10}

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.^{1Cor.2:1-5}

What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels. ²Mk.8:36-38

17/06/2020

Give me an undivided heart. *Give me an undivided heart, that I may fear Your name. I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify Your Name forever.*^{Ps.86:11-12}

Questions

In what ways do humans differ from animals?

Find some Bible references which show that praise and thanksgiving are decisions of our will.

What are the results of giving praise and thanks to God?

What are the results of not giving praise and thanks to God?

How do you define “undivided heart”? (c.f. *Give me an undivided heart, that I may fear Your name.*^{Ps.86:11} *I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them.*^{Ezek.11:19})

What does God write on our heart?

How can we maintain an undivided devotion to the Lord?

Comments

In what ways do humans differ from animals?

Animals have no spirit and so they have no God-consciousness—this means that they have no moral conscience either. There is no moral-code for animals and so they are neither good nor bad. Because animals have no spirit, they are not accountable to God. The “*law of the jungle*” is the natural way of animals and the 10 Commandments are not applicable to them. So when animals kill, it is not murder; when they take another animal’s “*spouse*”, it is not adultery; when they take something that belonged to another animal, it is not stealing; etc.

However, we have a spirit—a God-consciousness—and therefore a moral conscience. We have a God-given moral code and when we break that moral-code, we are accountable to God—each of us will have to give an account to God for our behaviour.

Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.^{Rom.2:14-15} Every person has a conscience, which is a divinely given warning device. This internal alarm system bears witness to the soul of its condition. When we have sinned, our conscience accuses us. But the new birth cleanses the guilty conscience of wrong. *Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*^{Heb.10:22}

God has given nations and governments the responsibility of the safety and security of their citizens and to enforce His moral-code. Thus when the government, through their established judiciary system, punishes wrongdoing by taking away the freedom (or even the life) of a criminal, it is not stealing or murder but justice. Ideally this should be done in accordance with God’s rules and principles, together with accountability to their citizens—we call this “*democracy*”! It is also a country’s God-ordained responsibility to protect its citizens from both internal aggressors and external aggressors—with war as a last resort.

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only

because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour. Love, for the Day Is Near Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbour as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.^{Rom.13:1-10}

Find some Bible references which show that praise and thanksgiving are decisions of our will.

I will sacrifice a freewill offering to you; I will praise your name, O LORD, for it is good.^{Ps.54:6}

I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you.^{Ps.22:22}

Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name.^{Rom.15:9}

What are the results of giving praise and thanks to God?

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God.^{Ps.42:11}

to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendour.^{Is.61:3}

He who sacrifices thank offerings honours me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God.^{Ps.50:23}

What are the results of not giving praise and thanks to God?

Ungratefulness!

One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."^{Lk.17:15-19}

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.^{2Tim.3:1-5}

How do you define "undivided heart"? (c.f. *Give me an undivided heart, that I may fear Your name.*^{Ps.86:11} *I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them.*^{Ezek.11:19})

An undivided heart is a converted heart. We should love God with all our heart:

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment.^{Matt.22:37-38}

But we are still capable of being "half-hearted" in our commitment to God.

You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.^{Rev.2:3-5}

What does God write on our heart?

God writes His laws on our hearts. God gives us a sanctified conscience that feels guilty when we do something wrong. However, our conscience can be seared or desensitised.

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good,

and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.^{1Tim.4:1-5}

How can we maintain an undivided devotion to the Lord?

Live like a Believer and not like an unbeliever:

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.^{Eph.4:17-24}

Be water-baptised as a Believer

and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.^{1Pet.3:21-22}

Meditate on God and God's values—and then put them 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. 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.^{Phi.4:8-9}

Live honourably

Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honourably in every way.^{Heb.13:18}

To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.^{Tit.1:15-16}

Be prayerful and thankful to God as we live transparent lives (i.e. not a liar or a hypocrite).

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.^{1Tim.4:1-5}

Live a temperate life and with a good grasp of Christian doctrine. (Good theology make life easy!)

Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.^{1Tim.3:8-9}

Live in the awareness of the final resurrection:

However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.^{Acts.24:14-16}

10/06/2020

What makes you happy?

Bring joy to your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you.^{Ps.86:4-5}

Questions

Is there a difference between happy, joyful and blessed?

How is Jesus is our Example?

Find Bible references of Jesus being blessed, joyful and full of grace and truth

Find Bible references of Jesus being hungry, tired, heavy hearted, sad, grieved.

Can we still be hungry, tired, heavy hearted, sad and grieved at the same time as being blessed joyful and full of grace and truth?

Is there a difference between being hungry, tired, heavy hearted, sad, grieved and being dominated by hunger, tiredness, heavy heartedness, sadness, grief?

How can we overcome doubts, fears, emotions, temptations or the world's influence?

(see *Rev.12:7-12; 1Jn.4:4; 1Jn.5:1-5; Heb.2:14-18*)

In Revelation 2-3, what 7 things does God promise to those who overcome?

Comments:

Is there a difference between happy, joyful and blessed?

Happy: Happiness is an emotion and is something we can feel: *Someone who is happy has feelings of pleasure, usually because something nice has happened or because they feel satisfied with their life.*

Joyful: This is similar to happy but usually implies a deeper pleasure than just being happy.

Blessed: *worthy of deep reverence or respect* (Gk. *Eulogy* = good word or *makarios* = possessing the favour of God—these words are interchangeable.)

Happiness has the connotation of fun but GNB uses “happy” for “blessed” (*makarios*) in Matt.5 *Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor; the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them! Happy are...*^{Matt.5:3f}

NIV also uses “happy” for “blessed”:

*A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord. In my judgment, she is **happier** if she stays as she is—and I think that I too have the Spirit of God.*^{1Cor.7:39-40}

Blessed is also contentment but contentment is a choice:

I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.^{Phil.4:11-13}

How is Jesus is our Example

I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.^{Jn.13:15-17}

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.^{1Cor.10:31-11:1}

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.^{Phil.2:5}

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” When they hurled their insults at him, he

did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.^{1Pet.2:21-23}

Find Bible references of Jesus being blessed, joyful and full of grace and truth

When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: “**Blessed is the king** who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”^{Lk.19:37-38}

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, **full of grace and truth**.^{Jn.1:14}

And the child grew and became strong; he was **filled with wisdom, and the grace** of God was upon him.^{Lk.2:40}

Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus **grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man**.^{Lk.2:51-52}

But about the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a sceptre of justice will be the sceptre of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by **anointing you with the oil of joy**.”^{Heb.1:8-9}

Blessing and honour and glory and power, be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!^{Rev.5:13}

Find Bible references of Jesus being hungry, tired, heavy hearted, sad, grieved.

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was **tempted** by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was **hungry**.^{Lk.4:1-2}

The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was **hungry**.^{Mk.11:12}

Jesus, **tired** as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.^{Jn.4:6}

But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honour because he **suffered** death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone... Because he himself **suffered** when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.^{Heb.2:9—18}

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was **deeply moved in spirit and troubled**.^{Jn.11:33}

Then he said to them, “**My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death**. Stay here and keep watch with me.”^{Matt.26:40}

And being in **anguish**, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.^{Lk.22:44}

Can we still be hungry, tired, heavy hearted, sad and grieved at the same time as being blessed joyful and full of grace and truth?

If Jesus was, then we can too!

Is there a difference between being hungry, tired, heavy hearted, sad, grieved and being dominated by hunger, tiredness, heavy heartedness, sadness, grief?

Yes. Martin Luther said: *you can't stop swallows for flying over your head but you can stop them from building a nest in your hair!* We can't control every circumstance but we don't have to let them dominate us. We are not to be overcome by circumstances but should be overcomers—actually, more than conquerors!

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin [missing the mark] reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to

life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin [missing the mark] shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.^{Rom.6:11-14}

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendour.^{Is.61:1-3}

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

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.^{Gal.2:20}

How can we overcome doubts, fears, emotions, temptations or the world's influence?

They overcame him by the **blood of the Lamb** and by the **word of their testimony**; they did **not love their lives so much as to shrink from death**.^{Rev.12:11}

You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because **the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world**.^{1Jn.4:4}

for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even **our faith**.

Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who **believes that Jesus is the Son of God**.^{1Jn.5:4-5}

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that **by his death** he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and **free those** who all their lives were **held in slavery** by their fear of death.^{Heb.2:14-15}

Jesus has completed His work

Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.^{Jn.19:30}

But to receive His promises, we must still accept them and act on them.

See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first... Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith... There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience... Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.^{Heb.3:12-4:13}

But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did.^{Rom.10:16-18}

In Revelation 2-3, what 7 things does God promise to those who overcome?

To him who overcomes, I **will give the right to eat from the tree of life**, which is in the paradise of God.^{Rev.2:7} [Tree of Life is Jesus Christ himself, in allusion to the tree of life in the garden of Eden; and is so called, because he is the author of life, natural, spiritual, and eternal; and because of his fruit, the blessings of life and grace, that are in him, of which believers may eat by faith.]

He who overcomes **will not be hurt at all by the second death**.^{Rev.2:11} [the 2nd death is eternal death.^{Rev.20:6; 20:14; 21:8}]

To him who overcomes, **I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.**^{Ren.2:17} [Historically, a white stone was given to victors at games for entrance to banquets (cf. the messianic banquet); such a stone was also used by jurors at trials to vote for acquittal.]

To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, **I will give authority over the nations**—'He will rule them with an iron sceptre; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'—just as I have received authority from my Father. **I will also give him the morning star.**^{Ren.2:26-28} [The morning star is Christ himself ^{Ren.22:16} Israel's ruler and rescuer, who was foreseen by Balaam.^{Nu.24:17}]

Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will, like them, **be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.^{Ren.3:4-6} [We are promised the conqueror's reward: communion with himself (walk with me) and the white raiment of victory] I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. Him who overcomes **I will make a pillar in the temple of my God.** Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and **I will also write on him my new name.**^{Ren.3:11-12} [As a pillar in God's temple, inscribed with the name of God, the one who conquers can never be excluded from God's presence, for he will dwell in God's new Jerusalem^{Ren.21:2} as David's royal heir.^{Ren.3:7}]

To him who overcomes, **I will give the right to sit with me on my throne,** just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.^{Ren.3:21}

03/06/2020

Promises or Presumptions?

I will listen to what God the LORD will say; He promises peace to His people, His saints—but... ^{Ps.85:8}

Questions

Name some of the divine promises in Scripture

Name some of the divine possibilities or potentials in Scripture

Name some of the divine warnings in Scripture

Maturity involves being balanced—having an understanding of all of God’s counsel (will). There is no short-cut to maturity and Church leaders are called “Elders” not because of their age but because of their experience

What are some of the characteristics of spiritual maturity?

What are some of the characteristics of spiritual immaturity?

Comments:

Name some of the divine promises in Scripture

Here are just a few promises:

Salvation

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. ^{Rom.10:13}

God’s constant companionship and help

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.” So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” ^{Heb.13:5-6}

Forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit

Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 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.2:38-39}

The gift of the Holy Spirit

If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! ^{Lk.11:13}

That Jesus will be with us till the end of the age

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

That we won’t be tempted beyond our ability to bear

And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. ^{1Cor.10:13}

Name some of the divine possibilities or potentials in Scripture. Many of these are conditional promises and are our expectations but they are not guaranteed.

That we will enjoy a long life

My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity. ^{Pron.3:1-2}

“Honour your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—“that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” ^{Eph.6:2-3} [The word promise can also mean making a claim or profession. In the new covenant the promise of the land is not physical land on earth but eternal life, which begins when one is regenerated here and now and comes to full reality in the age to come.]

Good health

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.^{3Jn.3}

That we will serve before kings

Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men.^{Pron.22:29}

Name some of the divine warnings in Scripture

Not to return to our folly

God promises peace to his people, his saints— but let them not return to folly.^{Ps.85:8}

Not to dishonour God

If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” and again, “The Lord will judge his people.” It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.^{Heb.10:26-31}

To fear God

I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.^{Lk.12:4-5}

Not to fall

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!^{1Cor.10:11-12}

What are some of the characteristics of spiritual maturity?

It's not God's plan for our life but our life for God's plan. The lowest form of Christianity is to be blessed—the highest form of Christianity is to be a blessing (c.f. Gen.12.1-2). Maturity involves being stable and a balanced as understanding of God's whole counsel (will). There is no short-cut to maturity and Church leaders are called “Elders” not because of their age but because of their experience

Joy, perseverance, completeness

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be **mature** and complete, not lacking anything.*^{Jas.1:2-4}

Enduring suffering with submission to God

*During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made **perfect**, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.*^{Heb.5:9-10}

A good understanding of the basic Christian doctrines

*You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to **maturity**, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so.*^{Heb.5:12-6:3}

A disciplined control of language, together with humility, wisdom, purity, gentleness, obedience, mercy, good deeds, impartiality, sincerity, peacefulness

*We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is **perfect**, able to keep their whole body in check... Praise and curses come from the same mouth. My brothers and sisters, this should not happen! Do clean and polluted water flow out of the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree produce olives? Can a grapevine produce figs? In the same way, a pool of salt-water can't produce fresh water. Do any of you have wisdom and insight? Show this by living the right way with the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you are bitterly jealous and filled with self-centred ambition, don't brag. Don't say that you are wise when it isn't true. That kind of wisdom doesn't come from above. It belongs to this world. It is self-centred and demonic. Wherever there is jealousy and rivalry, there is disorder and every kind of evil. However, the wisdom that comes from above is first of all pure. Then it is peaceful, gentle, obedient, filled with mercy and good deeds, impartial, and sincere. A harvest that has God's approval comes from the peace planted by peacemakers.*^{Jas. 3:2-18}

Emotional stability and spiritual discernment

*It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become **mature**, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*^{Eph. 4:11-16}

Spiritual stability and godly assurance

*that you may stand firm in all the will of God, **mature** and fully assured.*^{Col. 4:12}

Godly wisdom

We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the **mature**, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.^{1Cor. 2:6-7}

Ability to hear, retain and apply the Word of God

*The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they **do not mature**. But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.*^{Lk. 8:14-15}

Christian unity

*Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in **perfect** unity.*^{Col. 3:2-14}

Godlike

*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is **perfect**.*^{Matt. 5:48}

A genuine trust in God

*Jesus answered, "If you want to be **perfect**, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."*^{Matt. 19:21}

A grown-up outlook (children want to receive; adults want to give—c.f. Christmas time!)

*For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when **completeness** [maturity] comes, what is in part disappears. 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 the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we*

shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.^{1Cor.13:9-13}

A desire to encourage others

*I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue. Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be **adults**.*^{1Cor.13:18-20}

An ability to teach and be taught

He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.^{Col.1:28}

What are some of the characteristics of spiritual immaturity?

Carnality, jealousy and quarrelling

Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?^{1Cor.3:1-3}

bitterness jealousy, self-centred ambition, rivalry, disorder

*We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is **perfect**, able to keep their whole body in check... Praise and curses come from the same mouth. My brothers and sisters, this should not happen! Do clean and polluted water flow out of the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree produce olives? Can a grapevine produce figs? In the same way, a pool of salt-water can't produce fresh water. Do any of you have wisdom and insight? Show this by living the right way with the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you are bitterly jealous and filled with self-centred ambition, don't brag. Don't say that you are wise when it isn't true. That kind of wisdom doesn't come from above. It belongs to this world. It is self-centred and demonic. Wherever there is jealousy and rivalry, there is disorder and every kind of evil. However, the wisdom that comes from above is first of all pure. Then it is peaceful, gentle, obedient, filled with mercy and good deeds, impartial, and sincere. A harvest that has God's approval comes from the peace planted by peacemakers.*^{Jas.3:2-18}

27/05/2020

Is Revival the answer?

Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?^{Ps.85:6}

Questions

What is the greatest thing God could ever do for someone?

What is the greatest thing someone can ever do for God?

What could you do to achieve this?

What could you do to help others achieve greatness in God's Kingdom?

Suggested references: Jn.3:30; Eph.1:17-19; Matt.18:1-4; Matt.5:19-20

What 3 "R's" in 2Pet.1:12-15^{NIV} help us make our election and calling sure?

We are more than conquerors through Christ. What else do we have more than through Christ (i.e. plenty or an abundance of)?

What is the greatest thing God could ever do for you?

The greatest thing God could ever do for us is to give us New Birth.

I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.^{Jn.3:3}

This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people... For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more. By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.^{Heb.8:9-13}

God also gives us Faith—and without faith we cannot please Him.

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.^{Heb.11:6}

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.^{Eph.2:8-9}

What is the greatest thing you can ever do for God?

The greatest thing we can ever do for God is to love Him with everything we have—to love God spiritually, emotionally, mentally and practically.

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment.^{Matt.22:37-38}

Love never fails:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.^{1Cor.13:4-8}

Love has emotions but is not an emotion. Love is a commitment and marriage is a picture of our relationship with God:

"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.) Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God."^{Rev.19:6-9}

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.^{Rev.21:2}

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.^{Rev.22:7}

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless... For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.^{Eph.5:25-32}

This is why God is so protective over marriage.

You shall not commit adultery.^{Ex.20:14}

After a while his master's wife began to desire Joseph, so she said, “Come to bed with me.” But Joseph refused and said to her, “My master doesn't concern himself with anything in the house. He trusts me with everything he owns. No one in this house is greater than I. He's kept nothing back from me except you, because you're his wife. How could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?” Although she kept asking Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or be with her.^{Gen.39:7-10}

I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.^{2Cor.11:2}

I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD.^{Hos.2:19-20}

At conversion we make similar vows to the Wedding vows—we have promise God that we will love, comfort (stay close and in communication), honour (and obey) Him; in sickness and in health, forsaking all other, keep only unto Him as long as we live

Linked to love is faith and hope—but love is the greatest of these :

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.^{1Cor.13:13}

What could we do to achieve this (loving God with all our heart, soul and mind)?

Make a decision to cultivate a relationship with God—we call it “fellowship” or “prayer”—where we speak to God and listen to Him speak to us by the Holy Spirit (in our hearts and through the Scriptures).

BUT beware of those who say: “God said... to me” especially if it is telling you what to do!!! Every Christian has the Holy Spirit with in them who animates our conscience. The Holy Spirit confirms, convicts and challenges us—that is His ministry. It is OK to say “God told me...” in general terms around sound doctrine and godly morals, *i.e. God loves you; God will take care of you; God will provide; God will protect, etc.* But we should not be arrogant and presume to know God better than the Scriptures reveal—or pride will overtake us and we may fall.

Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be lowly in spirit and among the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud.^{Pron.16:18-19}

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.^{1Pet.1:5-6}

Better to say: *I believe that God may want you to..., please can you pray about it. I believe that God may want you to re-consider...*

We have no authority over other people's faith—let alone their lives

Not for that we have dominion over your faith, [Not that we lord it over your faith] but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.^{2Cor.1:4}

But we can and must warn others of sin

Keep an eye on anyone who doesn't obey the directions in our letter. Watch that person closely. Have nothing to do with him. Then he will feel ashamed. But don't think of him as an enemy. Instead, warn him as a brother or sister.^{2Thess.3:14-15}

Suppose I say to a sinful person, ‘You can be sure you will die.’ And you do not warn him. You do not try to get him to change his evil ways in order to save his life. Then he will die because he has sinned. And I will hold

you accountable for his death. But suppose you do warn that sinful person. And he does not turn away from his sin or his evil ways. Then he will die because he has sinned. But you will have saved yourself.^{Ezek.3:18-19}

Study the Scriptures

Do your best to present yourself [study to shew yourself approved] to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.^{2Tim.2:15}

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.^{Acts.17:11}

Meet and fellowship with other Believers.

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

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.^{Acts.2:4-47}

We are children of the light and we should make God's light our norm—the place where we are most comfortable and feel at home

giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.^{Col.1:12-14}

For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.^{Eph.5:5-11}

But, brothers and sisters, you don't live in the dark. That day won't take you by surprise as a thief would. You belong to the day and the light not to the night and the dark. Therefore, we must not fall asleep like other people, but we must stay awake and be sober.^{1Thess.5:4-6}

We live in the world and should minister to darkness but fellowship with light

I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside.^{1Cor.5:9-13}

Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."^{1Cor.15:33}

What could you do to help others achieve greatness in God's Kingdom?

Suggested references:

Promote Jesus and His values

He must become greater; I must become less.^{Jn.3:30}

He must become more important. I must become less important.^{NIV}

He must increase in importance, while I must decrease in importance.^{GW}

Pray that God would give others revelation of Himself and the hope He has given us:

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength.^{Eph.1:17-19}

Keep humble

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."^{Matt.18:1-4}

Practice what you preach

Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.^{Matt.5:19-20}

Be prophetic in the true sense of the word—Testify of Jesus and Edify, Exhort and Encourage others:

For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.^{Rev.19:10}

But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort... so that the church may be edified.^{1Cor.14:3-5}

What 3 "R's" in 2Pet.1:12-15^{NIV} help us make our election and calling sure?

So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.

Most of us don't need to learn any more truth about God but we all need to be Reminded, our memories Refreshed so that we can Remember God's Word.

We are more than conquerors through Christ. What else do we have more than through Christ (i.e. plenty or an abundance of)?

We have an abundance of Grace, Peace and Love

For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.^{Rom.5:17}

Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.^{Jude.2}

Grace and peace be yours in abundance.^{1Pet.1:2}

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.^{2Pet.1:2}

But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."^{Jas.4:6}

The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.^{1Tim.1:14}

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.^{Phil.1:9-11}

We have an overflow of Suffering and Comfort

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. ^{2Cor.1:3-5}

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. ^{Jn.16:33}

Our Faith and Love is increasing

We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. ^{2Thess.1:3-4}

We have plenty of Blessings—in fact we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ^{Eph.1:3}

Good works, seeds of righteousness and a harvest of righteousness.

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. ^{2Cor.9:8-10}

19/05/2020

God is our Shield

But You, LORD, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high.^{Ps.3:3}

Questions

God is a Shield around us but in what way does God protect us?

Is God's protection always guaranteed?

How do we access God's protection?

How much faith do we need to access God's promises?

How do we grow our faith?

Explain in your own words what you think this verse means: *But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.*^{Jude:20}

Questions

God is a Shield around us but in what way does God protect us?

God protects us from the evil one and when we are in trouble:

But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.^{2Thess.3:3}

For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling.^{Ps.27:5}

God protects us by the power of His Name:

I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.^{Jn.17:11-12}

For you have exalted above all things your name and your word.^{Ps.138:2}

Is God's protection always guaranteed?

God's spiritual protection is always guaranteed

We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. We know that we are children of God...^{1Jn.5:18-19}

We expect life to be good when we fear God

for whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye.^{Zech.2:8}

He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye,^{Deut.32:10}

I know that it will go better with God-fearing men, who are reverent before God.^{Ecc.8:12}

But we are not exempt from hardship or physical trouble—especially physical trouble motivated by the devil or the world

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.^{Jn.16:33}

Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.^{Gen.3:17-19}

Yet man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward.^{Job.5:7}

Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words. At my first defence no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear.^{2Tim.4:14-17}

How do we access God's protection?

God cares for us because He is our heavenly Father and loves us:

those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 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.8:14-17}

We access God's protection by His grace and we access God's grace by knowing Him:

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.^{2Thess.1:2}

[2] *Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.*^{2Pet.1:2}

We access God's protection by going to Him for help:

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.^{Heb.10:19-23}

The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.^{Pron.18:10}

We access God's protection by fellowshiping with God—by knowing God intimately:

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty... If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the LORD, who is my refuge—then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name."^{Ps.91:9-14}

How much faith do we need to access God's promises?

We don't need lots of faith—just living faith!

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" 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."^{Lk.17:5-6}

How do we grow our faith?

Our faith grows by feeding on God's Word—both the Living Word (Jesus) AND the Written Word (the Scriptures).

Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.^{Matt.4:4}

My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.^{Jn.4:34}

I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world... I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.^{Jn.6:32-35}

Our faith grows by fellowship—fellowship with both God AND with God's people. (fellowship means partnership, a participation, a sharing):

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.^{2Cor.13:14}

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ... But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.^{1Jn.1:3-7}

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all

reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.^{Eph.4:11-13}

Our faith grows by following Jesus and obeying His instructions:

I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you... Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.^{Jn.13:15-17}

But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.^{Jas.1:25}

Our faith grows through testing:

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.^{Jas.1:2-5}

Explain in your own words what you think this verse means: *But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.*^{Jude:20}

Building ourselves up in the faith is our responsibility—something that we have to do ourselves. We build ourselves up in the faith by being concerned about spiritual things, by remaining in God’s love and letting the Holy Spirit guide us (especially in our praying):

These are the people who cause divisions. They are concerned about physical things, not spiritual things. Dear friends, use your most holy faith to grow. Pray with the Holy Spirit's help. Remain in God's love as you look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to give you eternal life.^{GW}

Dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith. Let the Holy Spirit guide and help you when you pray.^{NIRV}

But you, dear friends, must build each other up in your most holy faith, pray in the power of the Holy Spirit.^{NLT}
But [you]·dear friends [beloved], use your most holy faith to build yourselves up [or build yourselves up on the foundation of your most holy faith; the whole body of true Christian doctrine and practice], praying ·in [in dependence on; or as directed by; or according to the will of] the Holy Spirit.^{EXB}

Edification, exhortation and encouragement (which is prophecy) will build us up in the faith:

But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort [encouragement] to men. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.^{1Cor.14:3-4}

Prophecy is basically a good testimony about Jesus:

For the essence of prophecy is to give a clear witness for Jesus.^{Rev.19:10 (NLT)}

I pray that you will be active in sharing what you believe. Then you will completely understand every good thing we have in Christ [by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus].^{Pbile.1:6}

13/05/2020

Sons and Servants.

I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.^{Jn.8:34-36}

Questions

How does the Bible define “sin”?

What does the Bible say about being without sin?

Why does God call us holy if we are still capable of sinning?

What is a “Christian”?

Can we be a Christian but live like a non-Christian?

How can we become a mature Christian (*i.e.* grow up in the faith)?

What are the standards that God expects from His servants?

What are the standards that God expects from His sons?

How does the Bible define “sin”?

Sin is anything that is less than God’s glory:

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.^{Rom.3:23}

Sin is against God:

Now the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD.^{Gen.13:13}

How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?^{Gen.39:9}

As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right. But be sure to fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you.^{1Sam.12:23-24}

Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” Nathan replied, “The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the LORD, the son born to you will die.”^{2Sam.12:13-14}

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.^{Ps.51:3-4}

Sin is lethal:

but 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.^{Jas.1:14-15}

The soul who sins is the one who will die.^{Ez.18:4}

Sin is inherent in all people (since Adam sinned):

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.^{Ps.51:5}

When they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you become angry with them... and if they have a change of heart... and repent and plead with you... and say, ‘We have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly!’; and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul... then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause. And forgive your people, who have sinned against you; forgive all the offenses they have committed against you.^{1Kg.8:46-50}

Sin is doing wrong:

Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.”^{Gen.4:6-7}

All unrighteousness is sin^{1Jn.5:17}

Sin is personal and we are personally accountable for our sin:

Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin.^{Deut.24:16}

Sin can be of omission as well as commission:

If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.^{Jas.4:17}

Sin can be intentional and unintentional:

Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."^{Jn.9:41}

If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin.^{Jn.15:22}

Sin is unbelief:

Everything that does not come from faith is sin.^{Rom.14:23}

What does the Bible say about being without sin?

We are all born sinners and remain capable of sinning:

As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one,"^{Rom.3:10}

God is faithful and reliable. If we confess our sins, he forgives them and cleanses us from everything we've done wrong. If we say, "We have never sinned," we turn God into a liar and his Word is not in us. My dear children, I'm writing this to you so that you will not sin. Yet, if anyone does sin, we have Jesus Christ, who has God's full approval. He speaks on our behalf when we come into the presence of the Father. He is the payment for our sins, and not only for our sins, but also for the sins of the whole world.^{1Jn.1:9-2:2}

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.^{Phil.3:12-14}

Why does God call us holy if we are still capable of sinning?

The Great Exchange—where God exchanges our sinfulness for His holiness and righteousness:

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.^{2Cor.5:21}

God credits us with righteousness as a free gift. This not our right or what we deserve—it is pure grace:

"Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works.^{Rom.4:3-6}

What is a "Christian"?

A Christian is a follower (disciple) of Christ—not just His teachings but Jesus Christ Himself.

The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.^{Acts.11:26}

Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"^{Acts.26:28}

However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.^{1Pet.4:16}

NT Believers were also called followers "the Way":

He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.^{Acts.9:2-3}

[Also: Acts.19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22]

Can we be a Christian but live like a non-Christian?

Yes—but this is immaturity and dishonouring to God.

but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. 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.^{1Cor.13:10-11}

For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human?^{1Cor.3:3-4}
We are part of the Church which is described as washed and clean^{Eph.5:25-27; Rev.19:7-8}).

If we live like the world, we will not enjoy the blessings of the Kingdom—the blessings of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.^{Rom.14:7}

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.^{1Cor.6:9-11}

How can we become a mature Christian (i.e. grow up in the faith)?

We mature as Christians by being equipped and built up through the Church, by learning about Jesus Christ and by agreeing with God:

Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.^{Eph.4:11-16}

*We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began... This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, for, "Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" **But we have the mind of Christ.**^{1Cor.2:6-7,16}*

We mature as Christians by putting God and His kingdom first:

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord... All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained.^{Phil.3:7-16}

We mature as Christians by standing firm in the will of God:

that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.^{Col.4:12}

We mature as Christians by understanding righteousness and consistently making the right choices:

Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.^{Heb.5:13-6:2}

We mature as Christians through hardships:

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.^{Jas.1:2-4}

What are the standards that God expects from His servants?

Faithfulness; Servantness

What are the standards that God expects from His sons?

Holiness; Loyalty; Being like Jesus our Elder Brother

06/05/2020

VE (Victory in Emmanuel) Day

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. ^{Gal.5:1}

Questions

Give a brief description of the Kingdom of God

What does the Bible say about the Kingdom of God?

How is the Kingdom of God different from the kingdoms of this world?

How is the Kingdom of God similar to the kingdoms of this world?

Are there any rules for the Kingdom of God?

Who are citizens of the Kingdom of God?

What role do you have in the Kingdom of God?

Comments

Give a brief description of the Kingdom of God

A Kingdom is a **king's domain**—so the **Kingdom of God is the domain of King Jesus**. God is Sovereign (He is Lord of everything) and so His Kingdom is everywhere but when we refer to the Kingdom of God, we usually mean **where God is acknowledged as King (Lord) and people submit to His authority**.

the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.” And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. ^{Rev.11:15-17}

Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. ^{Rev.12:10}

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. ^{Phil.2:9-11}

T.L.Osoborn says that the Kingdom of God is the rule of Christ in the life of a Believer.

What does the Bible say about the Kingdom of God?

The Kingdom of God is for the humble and consists of those who are persecuted for righteousness: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven... Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* ^{Matt.5:3-10}

The Kingdom of God is good but opposed by the world: *The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds...* ^{Matt.13:24-25}

The Kingdom of God is living and expanding: *The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed... though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants...* ^{Matt.13:31-32}

The Kingdom of God is of great value: *The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.* ^{Matt.13:44-46}

The Kingdom of God consists of righteous people: *Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.* ^{Matt.13:43}

The kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous. ^{Matt.13:47-49}

The Kingdom of God is spiritual, holy and happy: *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*^{Rom.14:17}

The Kingdom of God is action not talk: *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.*^{1Cor.4:20}

How is the Kingdom of God different from the kingdoms of this world?

The Kingdom of God is spiritual: *I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed.*^{1Cor.15:50-51}

The Kingdom of God has spiritual principles—if you want to be great you must serve: *The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*^{Lk.22:25-30}

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” ...Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.^{Matt.18:1-4}
but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.^{Matt.5:19}

People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.^{Lk.13:29-30}

Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.^{Mk.9:35}

The Kingdom of God is within us: *The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you.*^{Lk.17:20-21}

The Kingdom of God is stable: *Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.*^{Heb.12:28}

The Kingdom of God is sought but not bought: *And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.*^{Lk.12:29-32}

The Kingdom of God is the best: *I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.*^{Lk.7:28}

How is the Kingdom of God similar to the kingdoms of this world?

There is a King and there is a domain!

Are there any rules for the Kingdom of God?

Repentance: *From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”*^{Matt.4:17}

Righteousness: *Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the sceptre of your kingdom.*^{Heb.1:8}

Holiness: *Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? ...And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*^{1Cor.6:9-11}

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.^{Gal.5:19-21}

For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.^{Eph.5:5}

Worthiness: *For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.*^{1Thess.2:11-12}

Faith: *Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?*^{2as.2:5}

Love: *“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.*^{9Matt.22:36-40}

Who are citizens of the Kingdom of God?

Citizens of the Kingdom of God are those who have been born-again: *I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again... I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.*^{1n.3:3-5}

Citizens of the Kingdom of God are those who have access to God by the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ: *For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.*^{Eph.2:18-20}

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.^{Phil.3:20-21}

Citizens of the Kingdom of God are those who have been qualified by God: *Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*^{Col.1:12-14}

What role do you have in the Kingdom of God?

A loyal subject

A servant

A worshipper

Ambassador

Witness

29/04/2020

Statistics—What's so special about 153?

Jesus said: "Throw your net on the right side of the boat. There you will find some fish." ...Simon Peter climbed into the boat. He dragged the net to shore. It was full of large fish. There were 153 of them. But even with that many fish the net was not torn.^{Jn.21:6-11}

Questions

What are the Biblical principles of stewardship?

God is a God of abundance but what does the Bible say that God has given us an abundance of?

Should we only give when we have more than enough for ourselves?

Who are Jesus' sheep?

What do Jesus' sheep eat?

How can we tend Jesus' sheep?

Personal reflections:

Recall a dramatic or lifechanging incident in your life. What unusual specifics can you remember about the event?

Can you remember a time when you had a lack of something? What did you do? Do you have a lack of something now?

Can you recall an instance when you had an abundance of something? Did you share it with others?

Comments

What are the Biblical principles of stewardship?

If we are to feed Jesus' sheep we must utilise our resources wisely and this is called Stewardship. The main principle of **Stewardship** is **Faithfulness**: *This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.*^{1Cor.4:1-2} We are God's Stewards and He expects us to be faithful (trustworthy) servants in every area of our life, making His values our values, and applying them consistently in our life. We became citizens of heaven,^{Phil.3:20} when we were taken out of the kingdom of darkness and brought into the kingdom of light. *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*^{1Pet.2:9-10} Now there is no secular/sacred divide in our life because we are consecrated to God's service—we are "saints": *and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*^{Col.1:11-14}

The way we live and give shows how we appreciate God and His generosity—both God's spiritual generosity (salvation) and God's natural generosity (life, health, food, clothes etc.). "Don't ever worry and say, 'What are we going to eat?' or 'What are we going to drink?' or 'What are we going to wear?' Everyone is concerned about these things, and your heavenly Father certainly knows you need all of them. But first, be concerned about his kingdom and what has his approval. Then all these things will be provided for you. So don't ever worry about tomorrow. After all, tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."^{Matt.6:32-34} Jesus asked, "Didn't I heal ten men? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" And Jesus said to the man, "Stand up and go. Your faith has healed you."^{Lk.17:17-19} Our appreciation of God is shown in our worship (worship means

worth-ship) and worship is actually obedience: *Abraham told the servants. "The boy and I will travel a little farther. We will **worship** there, and then we will come right back."* "This is what the LORD says: Because you have **obeyed** me..." *Gen.22:5-16*

God has established a principle of sowing and reaping: *As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.* *Gen.8:22* In the beginning God created trees bearing fruit—with seed in it! *The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.* *Gen.1:12*

And God always gives us something to eat and something to sow: *Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.* *2Cor.9:10-11*

Everything on earth belongs to God and so if we don't use God's assets in line with His principles, we will always lose out! *Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."* And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."' "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God." *Lk.12:14-21*

What and how we give is worship and a way of showing what God is worth to us, but there are also practical benefits to giving—the hungry are fed, the poor are enriched and we are blessed! *Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, as it is written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little."* *2Cor.8:13-15* The whole group of believers lived in harmony. No one called any of his possessions his own. Instead, they shared everything. With great power the apostles continued to testify that the Lord Jesus had come back to life. God's abundant good will was with all of them. None of them needed anything. From time to time, people sold land or houses and brought the money to the apostles. Then the money was distributed to anyone who needed it. *Acts.4:32-35*

God is a God of abundance but what does the Bible say that God has given us an abundance of?

In the OT there are lots of physical gifts from God that were in abundance (wine, grain, etc., and even soap *Jer.2:22*) but the NT says that God gives spiritual gifts in abundance—the gift of the Holy Spirit and His attributes of mercy, grace, peace and love: *for God gives the Spirit without limit.* *Jn.3:34* *Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.* *Jude:1:2* *Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.* *2Pet.1:2* *Grace and peace be yours in abundance.* *1Pet.1:2* *How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.* *Ps.36:7-9*

Jesus says that abundance of possessions is not evidence of spirituality or even necessarily from God: *Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.* *Lk.12:15*

Should we only give when we have more than enough for ourselves?

The OT principle was to give the firstfruits—the first of possessions, not the left-overs: *Honour the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.*^{Pron.3:9-10} Because giving is primarily an act of worship, we should give regardless of our own situation—although obviously the more we have, the more we have to give. *I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.*^{Phil.4:10-14} And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. *Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.*^{2Cor.8:1-5} And as Jesus said: *It is more blessed to give than to receive.*^{Acts.20:35} It is not the quantity that we give but our attitude that counts: *Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. "I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."*^{Lk.21:1-4} We will always have poor people: *The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want.*^{Mk.14:7} And although we can never solve the world's problems but we can help some—and it is a privilege to share in the Kingdom ministry: *He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.*^{Matt.10:40-42} Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you. *They have told the church about your love. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans. We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth.*^{Jn.1:5-8} *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*^{Gal.6:9-10} *Give generously to [your brother] and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.*^{Deut.15:10-11}

Who are Jesus' sheep?

Jesus' sheep are the people from all nations and languages—they are people who hear His voice and follow Him: *I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.*^{Jn.10:14-16} *You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.*^{Rev.5:9-10}

What do Jesus' sheep eat?

Jesus' sheep are spiritual people and they eat spiritual food. God's Word is our spiritual food: *The Scriptures says 'People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'*^{1Matt.4:4} Obedience and believing God are also our spiritual food: *My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.*^{Jn.4:34} *Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal*

life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval... The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.^{Jn.6:27-29}

How can we tend Jesus' sheep?

Jesus' sheep are spiritual sheep and so our primary work is spiritual help—helping them to trust God by our encouragement and prayer—this is the true gift of prophecy: *But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.*^{1Cor.14:3} *Don't say anything that would hurt «another person». Instead, speak only what is good so that you can give help wherever it is needed. That way, what you say will help those who hear you. Don't give God's Holy Spirit any reason to be upset with you. He has put his seal on you for the day you will be set free from the world of sin.*^{Eph.4:29-30}

But we also have a duty to care to support them practically in whatever way we are able—as Jesus did: *“Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”*^{Lk.10:36-}

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22/04/2020

Holy Days or Holidays?

A week later... Jesus came and said, "Peace be with you!"^{Jn.20:26}

Questions

Why do Christians meet together on a Sunday instead of Saturday (the Sabbath)?

Do Christians have to keep the 4th Commandment? (Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.^{Ex.20:8-11}) See also: Ex.35:1-3; Nu.15:32-36; Mk.2:22-28; Heb.4:1-11

What does "holy" mean?

Who is a "saint"?

What does it mean to "keep the [Passover] Festival"? (*Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.*^{1Cor.5:7-8})

How do you understand this verse? *And with that he [Jesus] breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."*^{Jn.20:22}

Comments

Why do Christians meet together on a Sunday instead of Saturday (the Sabbath)?

Because Sunday is the day of Jesus' resurrection: *After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb... The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay."*^{Matt.28:1-6}

Because it was the day when Jesus appeared to His Disciples: *On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"*^{Jn.20:19} *A week later... Jesus came and said, "Peace be with you!"*^{Jn.20:26}

Because Sunday is the day the Church was birthed. *When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.*^{Acts.2:1-4}

Because Sunday is the first day of the week and when God created light: *God said, "Let there be light." And there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.*^{Gen.1:3-5} And on the first day of our spiritual life God spoke light into our lives and re-created us: *For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*^{2Cor.4:6} Now the light of God is within us in the Person of the Holy Spirit. *They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.*^{Ps.38:8-9}

Do Christians have to keep the 4th Commandment? (Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.^{Ex.20:8-11}) See also: Ex.35:1-3; Nu.15:32-36; Mk.2:22-28; Heb.4:1-11

God established the principle of "Sabbath" ("sabbath" means "to cease" or "complete rest") before any Covenant (either Old or New): *By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.*^{Gen.1:2-3}

Keeping the Sabbath day holy is one of the main tenets of Judaism and under God's instruction, Moses implemented it with the death penalty: *While the Israelites were in the wilderness, a man was found gathering wood on the Sabbath day. Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and the whole assembly, and they kept him in custody, because it was not clear what should be done to him. Then the LORD said to Moses, "The man must die. The whole assembly must stone him outside the*

camp.” So the assembly took him outside the camp and stoned him to death, as the LORD commanded Moses.^{Nu.15:32-36}

But even under the O/C, the Sabbath was meant for man’s benefit, not just as a religious regulation. *The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.*^{Mk.2:27-28} ... *How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.*^{Matt.12:12}

The purpose of Scripture is to explain God’s plan of Salvation through Jesus Christ—and the Sabbath is integral to this theme: *Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it... For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.*^{Heb.4:1-9}

The Christian Sabbath is resting from our works of trying to gain spiritual merit by what we do and receiving God’s salvation as a free gift. *“Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.*^{Rom.4:3-5}

The other 9 Commandments are moral rules and are reiterated in the NT but keeping the Sabbath is a spiritual issue and is not a requirement for Christians. In fact we are warned against trying to keep the Sabbath: *Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.*^{Col.2:16-17} Nevertheless there is the principle of “sabbath”—a physical and mental rest—that is God-ordained for all people and essential for good health. However, this is not a legal or spiritual requirement but simply “best practice”.

What does “holy” mean?

Holy means dedicated to God: *On that day HOLY TO THE LORD will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the LORD’s house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar. Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to the LORD Almighty.*^{Zech.14:20} We should live holy lives because God is holy. *But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”*^{1Pet.1:15-16} In this context, “holy” is clean, pure, honourable, righteous.

Who is a “saint”?

A saint is someone who has been made holy by God through the new birth—not by the Church because of some religious reputation. In the NT, the saints are the Believers.

To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons.^{Phil.1:1}

What does it mean to “keep the [Passover] Festival”?

(Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.)^{1Cor.5:7-8}

Paul explains that the “Passover” that we keep is a lifestyle not a ceremony—it is displaying the fruit of Spirit. Patriotism and tradition give us our national culture and there is a rightful place for Jews to keep Passover, Pentecost, Yom Kippur, Purim, etc. as their historical tradition—as we keep Bonfire night and New Year’s Eve. But Christians should not keep the OT festivals as a religious activity because they are obsolete.^{Heb.8:13} Christians are under the New Covenant and we don’t keep not the OT festivals themselves but their **fulfilment**—what they illustrated and represented. Passover commemorated the Exodus—the emancipation from slavery and the formation of a Nation through the lamb that was killed and eaten. Christians have been

emancipated from slavery to sin and are a holy Nation belonging to God through the Lamb of God that was killed.

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said: Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!^{Jn.1:29} But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.^{1Pet.2:9-10}

How do you understand this verse? *And with that he [Jesus] breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”^{Jn.20:22}*

When Jesus breathed on His Disciples to receive the Holy Spirit it was different from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost a few days later.

Pentecost commemorated the giving of the Law at Sinai. Pentecost also indicated the beginning of the harvest—which continued until the Feast of Tabernacles. Both of these events were illustrations of our Salvation under the New Covenant, where God’s law is written on our hearts (in contrast to the giving of the Law on tablets of stone) when the Holy Spirit was poured out on all people. This was the start of the great spiritual harvest of the Church and will continue until Jesus returns.

People under the OT had to believe—*By faith...*^{Heb.11} (as we do under the NT) but they were not “born-again” because the Holy Spirit did not dwell within them as He does with us today. This is why Jesus said to Nichodemus “*you must be born again*”. Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He prepared His Disciples to receive the Holy Spirit’s empowerment for Witnessing by imparting the Holy Spirit to them. When Jesus breathing on His Disciples, He imparted His spiritual life into them and they were born-again—they regained what their father Adam lost: *the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.*^{Gen.2:7} They became spiritually alive—as we do at new-birth: “*The first man Adam became a living being*”; *the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.*^{1Cor.15:45}

15/04/2020

Resurrection Day

It is true! The Lord has risen.^{Lk.24:34}

Questions.

1. Find some Bible verses that describe what Jesus was like before His resurrection (i.e. in His mortal body).
2. Find some Bible verses that describe what Jesus was like after His resurrection (i.e. in His immortal body).
3. What does Jesus' resurrection mean to you?
4. How does Jesus' resurrection affect your life?
5. How do you imagine the final resurrection will be like for you?
6. How are you preparing for that final resurrection?

Comments

Find some Bible verses that describe what Jesus was like before His resurrection (i.e. in His mortal body).

This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.^{Lk.2:12}

And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.^{Lk.2:40}

Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)^{Jn.4:6-8}

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity.^{Heb.2:14}

Because he himself suffered when he was tempted,^{Heb.2:18}

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.^{Heb.4:15}

Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping.^{Matt.8:24}

An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.^{Lk.22:43-44}

After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.^{Matt.4:2}

Find some Bible verses that describe what Jesus was like after His resurrection (i.e. in His immortal body).

Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." ... They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.^{Lk.24:39-42}

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it." A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."^{Jn.20:25-27}

His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.^{Rev.1:14-16}

they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him... When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from

their sight. They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”^{Lk.24:15-32}

What does Jesus’ resurrection mean to you?

Jesus’ resurrection is proof that Jesus was telling the truth

From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.^{Matt.16:21}

Jesus is God

The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.^{Jn.10:17-18}

Jesus is Lord of all—including death

Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.^{Rev.1:17-18}

I have my sin forgiven

If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.^{1Cor.15:13-19}

Jesus’ resurrection is foundational to our Christian life

That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.^{Rom.10:8}

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel.^{2Tim.2:8}

How does Jesus’ resurrection affect your life?

Jesus’ resurrection gives me hope (assurance) of life after I die

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.^{1Cor.15:20}

Jesus’ resurrection meant that Jesus could send the Holy Spirit

But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.^{Jn.16:7}

Without the Holy Spirit we have no spiritual life or power

no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.^{1Cor.12:3}

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins... God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,^{Eph.2:1-6}

With the Holy Spirit we have both life and power

I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.^{Lk.24:9}

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses.^{Acts.1:8}

having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.^{Col.2:12}

By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.^{1Cor.6:14}

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.^{Rom.8:11}

How do you imagine the final resurrection will be like for you?

I'll have a new body that is immortal

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.^{Phil.3:20-21}

The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.^{1Cor.15:47-49}

There will be no crying, suffering or pain

“Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”^{Rev.20:3-5}

There will be perfect joy and happiness for evermore

my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.^{Ps.16:9-11}

How are you preparing for that final resurrection?

By trying to live so I hear God say to me: “Well done good and faithful servant”

His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'^{Matt.25:21}

By renewing my mind

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.^{Rom.12:1-2}

By imitating Jesus and taking Him as my Model

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.^{Phil.2:5}

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.^{2Cor.3:18}

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.^{Rom.8:29}

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.^{1Jn.3:2-3}

By honouring Jesus

I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God.^{Lk.12:8-9}

08/04/2020

Questions

Because the Prophet had proved the great mercies of God at divers (various) times and in sundry manners, he gathers a certain assurance, fully persuading himself that God will continue the very same goodness towards him for ever. (Preface to Psalm 23 in the Geneva Bible)

1. Find some verses that describe what satan is like.
2. Find some verses that describe satan's defeat.
3. Find some verses that describe satan as a deceiver.
4. What “enemies?” have you had to face in your life?
5. Can you recall a specific instance when you had God's assurance through a difficult time because you had already proved His faithfulness and mercy in your life?
6. What is the feast that God has prepared for you in the midst of your enemies?
7. What would help to bring you to the place of confidence that the Commentator on Psalm 23:5 in the Geneva Bible had: *Albeit my enemies fought to destroy me, yet God delivers me and deals most liberally with me despite of them.*
8. The sons of Ephraim ran away^{Ps.78:9} when the enemy came—in spite of God's specific promise that they would be victorious ((Ephraim is Joseph's son^{Gen.49:22-24}) but Eleazar stood his ground.^{2Sam.23:10} What would help you to stand firm when trouble comes?
9. Perhaps the greatest “enemy” we will have to face is death. How can we prepare face this last foe with confidence and assurance?

Comments

Because the Prophet had proved the great mercies of God at divers (various) times and in sundry manners, he gathers a certain assurance, fully persuading himself that God will continue the very same goodness towards him for ever. (Preface to Psalm 23 in the Geneva Bible)

1. Find some verses that describe what satan is like.

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.^{Jn.8:44}

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy;^{Jn.10:10}

The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning.^{1Jn.3:8}

And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.^{2Cor.11:14-15}

The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.^{Rev.12:9}

2. Find some verses that describe satan's defeat.

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.^{Rom.16:20}

He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work^{1Jn.3:8}

And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.^{Col.2:15}

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.”^{Rev.12:10-11}

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.^{Heb.2:14-15}

3. Find some verses that describe satan as a deceiver.

But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.^{2Cor.11:3-4}

The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing.^{2Thess.2:9-10}

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

4. What “enemies” have you had to face in your life?

Enemies can be personalities (either physical or spiritual) but most often they are psychological—thoughts (temptations) or ethical choices.

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.^{Jas.4:4}

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.^{Col.1:21-23}

We counter these enemies by renewing our minds and having the same attitude as Christ:

Don't become like the people of this world. Instead, change the way you think. Then you will always be able to determine what God really wants—what is good, pleasing, and perfect.^{Rom.12:2}

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus [You should think in the same way Christ Jesus does]: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself...^{Phil.2:5-8}

5. Can you recall a specific instance when you had God's assurance through a difficult time because you had already proved His faithfulness and mercy in your life?

The LORD saved me from the paw of the lion. He saved me from the paw of the bear. And he'll save me from the powerful hand of this Philistine too.^{1Sam.17:35}

If the LORD had not been on our side when people attacked us, they would have swallowed us alive when their anger flared against us; the flood would have us, the torrent would have swept over us, the raging waters would have swept us away.^{Ps.124:2-5}

6. What is the feast that God has prepared for you in the midst of your enemies?

God's Word is our spiritual food so the feast that God has prepared is His Word—primarily Jesus the Living Word, but also the Bible, His Written Word:

It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'^{1Matt.4:4}

In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not

acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity,^{Heb.5:12-6:1}

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like new-born babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.^{1Pet.2:1-3}

It is knowing God personally through Jesus Christ that we have peace in the midst of our enemies and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him.^{2Sam.7:1}

Our peace is not dependant on circumstances without but on Christ within.

Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.^{Jn.17:3}

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.^{2Pet.1:2}

Great peace have those who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.^{Psa.119:165}

You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.^{Is.26:3}

The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.^{Phil.4:5-7}

7. **What would help to bring you to the place of confidence** (like the Commentator on Psalm 23:5 in the Geneva Bible had: *Albeit my enemies fought to destroy me, yet God delivers me and deals most liberally with me despite of them.*)

Seeing (and acknowledging) God's faithfulness in the good times gives us the confidence to trust Him in the tough times

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?^{Rom.8:31-32}

I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread. They are always generous and lend freely; their children will be a blessing.^{Psa.37:25-26}

Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you." So we can say with confidence, "The LORD is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?"^{Heb.13:5-6}

8. **What would help you to stand firm when trouble comes?**

The sons of Ephraim ran away when the enemy came: *The soldiers of Ephraim were armed with bows. But they ran away on the day of battle. They didn't keep the covenant God had made with them. They refused to live by his law. They forgot what he had done. They didn't remember the wonders he had shown them.*^{Psa.78:9}

This was in spite of God's specific promise that they would be victorious (especially with archery): *Joseph is a vine that grows a lot of fruit. It grows close by a spring. Its branches climb over a wall. Mean people shot arrows at him. They shot at him because they were angry. But his bow remained steady. His strong arms moved freely. The hand of the Mighty One of Jacob was with him. The Shepherd, the Rock of Israel, stood by him.*^{Gen.49:22-24} (Ephraim was Joseph's son)

But Eleazar stood his ground. *Next to him was Eleazar son of Dodai the Ahobite. As one of the three mighty men, he was with David when they taunted the Philistines gathered for battle. Then the men of Israel retreated, but he stood his ground and struck down the Philistines till his hand grew tired and froze to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day.*^{2Sam.23:10}

If we don't stand firm in our faith we won't stand at all!^{Is.7:9} Because God is with us, we can stand firm in our faith: *If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?*^{Rom.8:31-32}

Knowing God's Word (both Jesus and the Scriptures) will bring us to a place of confidence:

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. ^{Ps.119:11}

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. ^{2Tim.3:14-17}

9. How can we prepare face with confidence and assurance, our greatest and last enemy, death?

We must stay in communion with Jesus, keeping our fellowship with Him, fresh and sweet. We do this by involving Jesus in our daily activities—remember prayer is not a shopping list or a liturgy but WORSHIP (which is obedience). **Obey** God's Word; **Speak** God's Word; **Meditate** on God's Word:

Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. ^{Josh.1:7-8}

Know what God has recorded about life and death:

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ^{1Cor.15:22-26}

Although the circumstance of our own death may not be of our choosing, we can be assured that God will give us grace to face it with confidence and assurance

But the Lord said to me: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. ^{2Cor.12:9-10}

Because He lives I can face tomorrow.
Because He lives all my fear is gone.
And now I know that He holds the future,
And life is worth the living, now I know He lives.

And then one day I'll cross the river,
Life's final war with pain is won.
And then as death gives way to victory,
I'll see the lights of glory because Jesus lives.

01/04/2020

Questions

1. What is a Christian?
2. What happens to Christians when they die?
3. What happens to non-Christians when they die?
4. How is human life different from animal life?
5. What is the difference between our physical life and our spiritual life?
6. When does our physical life begin and when does our spiritual life begin?
7. Our physical life ends when we stop breathing—but does our spiritual life end? Explain

Answers

1 What is a Christian?

The term **Christian** was first used in Antioch:

*The disciples were called **Christians** first at Antioch.*^{Acts.11:26}

The name **Christian** was first used as a derisory appellation much like Pentecostals were called “*tongues-talkers*” in the early C20th. Some people for other Churches even spat at Pentecostals, calling them “*tongues-talkers*”!

Christian is used 2 other times in NT.

*Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a **Christian**?”*^{Acts.26:26}

*However, if you suffer as a **Christian**, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.*^{1Pet.4:16}

Believers are also referred to as:

Follower of the Way

However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect.^{Acts.24:14}

Disciple (which means: learner, pupil)

The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea.^{Acts.11:29}

Christ is Greek for **Messiah (Anointed One)**, i.e. the one with God’s authority). OT Prophets, Priests and Kings were anointed with oil to represent God’s authority and presence.

So a **Christian** is a **follower of Christ** (not just a follower of Christ’s teachings)—someone with God’s authority and presence because Christ is within them.

2 What happens to Christians when they die?

OT saints went to Sheol (Gk. Hades) when they died. Sheol is a generic name for the place those who died went to.

because you will not abandon me to the grave, [Hebrew Sheol] nor will you let your Holy One see decay.^{Ps.16:10}

Peter said that this refers to Jesus after He died and before His resurrection.^{Acts.2:27} But Jesus ascended to Heaven where He is now seated at the Father’s right hand.

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,^{Eph.1:19-20}

When Christians die, they go straight to be with Jesus:

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.^{Phil.1:22-24}

Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be.^{Jn.12:26}

having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.^{Tit.3:7}

The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom.^{2Tim.4:18}

But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.^{2Pet.3:13}

3 What happens to non-Christians when they die?

When non-Christians die, they immediately enter their eternal torment and punishment: *the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.*^{2Pet.2:9}

By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.^{2Pet.3:7}

In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire... They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.^{Jude.1:7;13}

but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.^{Heb.10:27}

4 How is human life different from animal life?

All animals and birds have the “*breath of life*”, i.e. a soul (an individual personality)

And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.^{Gen.1:30}

However, when God made man, He **breathed** the breath of life into him and Adam became a living soul.

the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being (soul).^{Gen.2:7}

It is the breath of God (or God’s life) that makes human life (soul) distinct from animal life (soul). Humans have a spirit (a God consciousness) within them—which is God’s life—and all spirit is eternal.

He has also set eternity in the hearts of men.^{Ecc.3:11}

[Angels and demons are spirits, which is why God cannot annihilate the devil but has to contain him in hell:

Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels!^{Matt.25:41}

Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.^{Rev.20:14-15}]

5 What is the difference between our physical life and our spiritual life?

Our physical life is our natural life (our temporal life in our body) and our spiritual life is our relationship with God (our eternal life—either united with God or separated from God).

What I'm about to tell you is true. No one can enter God's kingdom without being born through water and the Holy Spirit. People give birth to people. But the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised when I say, 'You must all be born again.'^{Jn.3:5-7}

6 **When does our physical life begin and when does our spiritual life begin?**

Physical life begins at conception (there are no proof texts about exactly when life begins but there are no proof texts about life beginning after conception either!).

David's life (and sinful nature) began at conception:

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.^{Ps.51:5}

Jesus' physical life began at conception:

The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.^{Lk.1:35}

The way Jesus was conceived physically helps us to understand how we are conceived spiritually—God the Holy Spirit overshadows us and we are born again.

For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.^{1Pet.1:23}

Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.^{1Cor.12:3}

7 **Our physical life ends when we stop breathing but does our spiritual life end?**

Explain

Death is separation. When Adam sinned, his immediate death was spiritual—he was separated from God. Adam's physical death took another 930 years!

but God did say, "You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die."^{Gen.3:3}

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."^{Gen.3:8-10}

Altogether, Adam lived 930 years, and then he died.^{Gen.5:5}

Our physical life ends when we stop breathing—our spirit and soul separate from our body.

Our spiritual life never ends because our spirit is eternal—we either continue in our state of eternal life (because we are united with God through new-birth) or we continue in our state of eternal death (because we have not been united with God through new-birth).

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live... Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.^{Jn.5:24-29}

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.^{Jn.3:18}