

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

Scripture is the wisdom of God by which I can order my daily life.

Father, may we clearly know Your will and achieve the height and depth of spiritual wisdom and understanding. May our lives be a credit to You, Lord; and what's more, may we continue to delight You by doing every good work and growing in the true knowledge that comes from being close to You. Strengthen us with Your infinite power, according to Your glorious might, so that we will have everything we need to hold on and endure hardship patiently and joyfully. Thank You, Father, as You have made us eligible to receive our portion of the inheritance given to all those set apart by the light. You have rescued us from dark powers and brought us safely into the kingdom of Your Son, whom You love and in whom we are redeemed and forgiven of our sins through His blood.

[Colossians 1:9-14 The Voice]

God is Spirit and He reveals Himself to spirit and He can reveal Himself to our spirit through the Word. For instance, we hear someone read the Word of God. The thing that is read is weighed and measured by our intellect but in some way which is inexplicable to reason, it affects our spirit. It answers a need. Listening to the Word God changes our spirit. E.W.Kenyon

Contents

Introduction	2
07/05/2025	4
30/04/2025	5
23/04/2025	11
16/04/2025	16
09/04/2025	21
02/04/2025	26
26/03/2025	31
19/03/2025	35
12/03/2025	40
05/03/2025	44
26/02/2025	49
19/02/2025	53
12/02/2025	59
05/02/2025	64
29/01/2025	68
22/01/2025	74
15/01/2025	77
8/01/2025	82

Introduction

The Bible is unlike any other book because the very words were breathed (inspired) by God. *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} The words in the Bible still contain God's breath (His life) and they are our spiritual food: *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} And so it is important for us to study the Bible. *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.*^{2Tim.2:14-15} However, we should be careful to only take out of the Bible what is there and not add anything to the Bible: *Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.*^{Deut.4:2} *I am warning everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book. If you add anything to them, God will add to you the plagues told about in this book. If you take any words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from you your share in the tree of life. He will also take away your place in the Holy City. This book tells about these things.*^{Rev.22:18-19}

Exegesis and Eisegesis. Exegesis is the process of getting "out" ('ex') of the text what is truly there in the first place. The opposite of **exegesis** is **eisegesis** which is the process of putting "into" ('eis') 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 extracting the meaning of a verse.

The second principle is consistency: Never interpret a text in a way that contradicts the overall message of Scripture.

Don't be afraid of using other reference 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 be careful not to 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!**



Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

The heart of God opens itself to us in God's Word.

I do not treasure God's promise in my understanding but in my heart. It is not to be analysed by my intellect, but to be pondered in my heart. Therefore, it is never sufficient simply to have read God's Word. It must penetrate deep within us, dwell in us, like the Holy of Holies in the Sanctuary, so that we do not sin in thought, word, or deed. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*



Scripture can be more than the rule of faith—it can also be the source of meaning which inspires all our willing, planning, acting and serving in the world. Scripture's history, personalities, stories, prophets, precepts, wisdom and challenges can all become a source of inspiration when we apply them to our life's circumstances. In order for this to occur, we need to make time to reflect on our life's circumstances as well as Scripture, and then bring the two into careful dialogue.

We must prayerfully and carefully read the Scriptures—not just for information but to let God's Word mold our conscious and subconscious thoughts so that we begin to think like God.

It is easy to turn time with Scripture into a game of “*Twenty Questions*”: how to have a happy relationship, learn financial faithfulness, or whatever. A sharp line can be drawn between utilitarian approaches that treat the Bible as a how-to manual or a database for addressing my questions, and the formation of Scripture-shaped minds that understand God and God's creation through Scripture-shaped lenses. **The latter requires patient, deliberate reading—reading, as it were, for no good reason but for the sake of having our dispositions and reflexes shaped by Scripture.**

Lk.9:44

Let these words sink into your ears NRSV

Let these words sink into your ears: ESV

Mark these words diligently: Geneva

Take these words to heart, NET

Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: NIV

Listen to me and remember what I say. NLTse

Treasure and ponder each of these next words: TM

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

07/05/2025

Psalm 136

Video:

Questions

Why is it important to know what the Bible teaches?

Is all of the Bible meant to be interpreted literally?

How can we know what is a literal prophesy, what is a promise and what is a premise?

Is there a difference between the Word of God and the Bible?

How do we get faith?

How do we get spiritual understanding?

Questions

Why is it important to know what the Bible teaches?

So we are not deceived

So that we have God's approval

Tim

So that we can live a fulfilled and satisfying life. (Maturity enables us to live a better and less stressful life)

Blunt axe means need more strength

So that we can obey God

So that we can help others

Is all of the Bible meant to be interpreted literally?

Some of the Bible is parable (allegorical); some of the Bible is history (and yet allegorical); some of the Bible is promises' some of the Bible is premises; some of the Bible is prophesy.

How can we know what is a literal prophesy, what is a promise and what is a premise?

See the context;

Is there a difference between the Word of God and the Bible?

Yes, Jesus is the Word of God, the Bible is the written testimony of Jesus.

Jn.7

How do we get faith?

Faith comes from hearing the Word of God — we need our spiritual ears opened

How do we get spiritual wisdom?

Wisdom is the application of knowledge — we need to apply God's Word *i.e.* do what it says

30/04/2025

Psalm 135

Video: Let's Test The Bible, Here's what happens

Questions

Why do you think that the exact number of fish caught (153) is recorded?

Why did Jesus single Peter out from the other Disciples?

Can you find any Biblical evidence that Peter was leader of the early Church?

What does it mean to “*follow*” Jesus?

What does it mean to “*feed my sheep*”?

How do we feed Jesus’ sheep?

Comments

Why do you think that the exact number of fish caught (153) is recorded?

Because God is interested in details

To give the story credibility—a specific number shows that it was an eye-witness account

Numbers in the Bible are sometimes significant—but not always!

1 =absolute, “one God”. Also light and creation (Gen.1) plus new creation—*c.f.* resurrection of Jesus and our day of worship

2 =unity, “two witnesses”

3 =ultimate, “holy, holy, holy”

4 =earth, “four corners/winds of the earth”

5 =grace

6 =sin/man

7 =complete, ending

10 =human government “ten kings”

12 =redemption

13 =evil

42 months = the period between 64AD and 66AD when Nero embarked on the most violent campaign against Christians martyring multitudes.

666 = six hundred and sixty six, not six, six, six. It is the numerical value of “Caesar Nero”

1000 = large number, when linked with years = long time, equates to “the Kingdom of God”.

144,000 = 12,000 (12 x 1,000 = many redeemed) from 12 tribes (the redeemed)

There is therefore a logical divide in Revelation after Revelation 19 where a thousand year gap is described. We understand one thousand years to mean a long time. This means that the first 19 chapters had an imminent application to the original audience in early 64 AD (when Revelation was probably written) and the events described from Revelation 20 and following pertain to events to take place after “a long time”.

Why did Jesus single Peter out from the other Disciples?

Peter, James and John were Jesus’ closest Disciples.

After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. Matt.17:1

Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, “Don't be afraid; just believe.” He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. Mk.5:36-38

It was Peter who had the most strongly declared his support for Jesus—even though all Jesus’ Disciples deserted Him when He was arrested

Peter declared, “Even if all fall away, I will not.” “Truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times.” But Peter insisted emphatically, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the others said the same. Mk.14:29-31

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." But he replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." Jesus answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me." Lk.22:31-34

Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) Jn.18:10

And it was Peter who had made the loudest denial

While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him. "You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus," she said. But he denied it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway. When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, "This fellow is one of them." Again he denied it. After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean." He began to call down curses, and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about." Immediately the rooster crowd the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows twice a month you will disown me three times." And he broke down and wept. Mk.14:66-72

Peter and John did not completely desert Jesus but followed at a distance

Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in. Jn.18:15-16

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. Jn.19:25-27

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. Jn.20:1-6

Can you find any Biblical evidence that Peter was leader of the early Church?

Paul wrote his letter to the Church at Rome some time before he visited them and he makes no mention of Peter in this letter. Therefore we can assume that Peter did not found the Church and neither was he the presbyter there. However, there is good reason to believe that Peter did write his letters from Rome a year or two before he was killed there.

- A.D.52 **Galatians** from Corinth
- A.D.57/58 **Romans** from Corinth
- A.D.61 Paul arrives at Rome
- A.D.61-63 Paul's imprisonment at Rome
- A.D.62 **Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon** from Rome
- A.D.63 **Philippians** from Rome
- A.D.63-65 Paul's release & further ministry
- A.D.64 **1 & 2 Peter** from Rome
- A.D.65 Peter's death in Rome
- A.D.65 Paul's 2nd imprisonment at Rome
- A.D.65 **2 Timothy** from Rome
- A.D.65 Paul's death at Rome

The Roman Catholic church believes that Jesus said that He would build the Church on Peter and that he was the 1st Bishop of Rome

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, 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." Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. Matt. 16:13-17

Roman Catholics have appealed to this passage to defend the idea that Peter was the first pope [*"pope"* means *"father"*]. The key question concerns Peter's relationship to "this rock." In Greek, "Peter" is *Petros* ("stone"), which is related to *petra* ("rock"). The other NT name of Peter, Cephas (cf. John 1:42; 1 Cor 1:12), is the Aramaic equivalent: *kepha'* means "rock," and translates in Greek as *Kēphas*. "This rock" has been variously interpreted as referring to (1) Peter himself; (2) Peter's confession; or (3) Christ and his teachings. For several reasons, the first option is the strongest. Jesus' entire pronouncement is directed toward Peter, and the connecting word "and" (Gk. *kai*) most naturally identifies the rock with Peter himself. But even if "this rock" refers to Peter, the question remains as to what that means. Protestants generally have thought that it refers to Peter *in his role of confessing Jesus as the Messiah*, and that the other disciples would share in that role as they made a similar confession (see Eph 2:20, where the church is built on all the apostles; cf. Rev 21:14). Jesus' statement did not mean that Peter would have greater authority than the other apostles (indeed, Paul corrects him publicly in Gal 2:11-14), nor did it mean that he would be infallible in his teaching (Jesus rebukes him in Matt 16:23), nor did it imply anything about a special office for Peter or successors to such an office. Certainly in the first half of Acts Peter appears as the spokesman and leader of the Jerusalem church, but he is still "sent" by other apostles to Samaria (Acts 8:14), and he has to give an account of his actions to the Jerusalem church (Acts 11:1-18). Peter is presented as having only one voice at the Jerusalem council, and James has the decisive final word (Acts 15:7-21). And, though Peter certainly has a central role in the establishment of the church, he disappears from the Acts narrative after Acts 16. "Church" (Gk. *ekklesia*) is used only here and in Matt 18:17 in the Gospels. Jesus points ahead to the time when his disciples, his family of faith (12:48-50), will be called "my church." Jesus will build his church, and though it is founded on the apostles and the prophets, "Christ Jesus himself [is] the cornerstone" (Eph 2:20).

The word *pope* derives from Ancient Greek *πάππας* (*páppas*) 'father'. In the early centuries of Christianity, this title was applied, especially in the East, to all bishops and other senior clergy, and later became reserved in the West to the bishop of Rome during the reign of Pope Leo I (440–461), a reservation made official only in the 11th century. The earliest record of the use of the title of 'pope' was in regard to the by-then-deceased patriarch of Alexandria, Heraclas (232–248). The earliest recorded use of the title "pope" in English dates to the mid-10th century, when it was used in reference to the 7th century Roman pope Vitalian in an Old English translation of Bede's Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum.

Irenaeus of Lyons, (c. 130 – c. 202 AD), *Against Heresies III, Chapter 3.2*

The blessed apostles [Peter and Paul], then, having founded and built up the Church [in Rome], committed into the hands of Linus the office of the episcopate. Of this Linus, Paul makes mention in the Epistles to Timothy. To him succeeded Anacletus; and after him, in the third place from the apostles, Clement was allotted the bishopric. ... To this Clement there succeeded Eviristus. Alexander followed Evaristus; then, sixth from the apostles, Sixtus was appointed; after him, Telephorus, who was gloriously martyred; then Hyginus; after him, Pius; then after him, Anicetus. Soter having

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

succeeded Anicetus, Eleutherius does now, in the twelfth place from the apostles, hold the inheritance of the episcopate.

*Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus. Do your best to get here before winter. Eubulus greets you, and so do Pudens, **Linus**, Claudia and all the brothers and sisters. The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you all. 2Tim.4:19-22*

What does it mean to “follow” Jesus?

To follow Jesus means to be His subjects, servants and disciples

Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. Lk.9:23-26

“Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it. Matt.10:37-42

Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me. Jn.12:23-26

“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice.” Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them. Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep... My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. Jn.10:1-7;27

Peter said to him, “We have left all we had to follow you!” “Truly I tell you,” Jesus said to them, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life.” Lk.18:28-30

As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” He said to another man, “Follow me.” But he replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.” Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.” Lk.9:57-62

What does it mean to “feed my sheep”?

Pastor means Shepherd “Feed my sheep” means to care, provide and protect Jesus’ followers as a shepherd would his flock.

Jesus is the Chief Shepherd (Pastor)

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. “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.10:11-16

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Heb.13:21

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

For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice. “ ‘As for you, my flock, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats. Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet? Must my flock feed on what you have trampled and drink what you have muddied with your feet? “ ‘Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says to them: See, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them away, I will save my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another. I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken. “ ‘I will make a covenant of peace with them and rid the land of savage beasts so that they may live in the wilderness and sleep in the forests in safety. I will make them and the places surrounding my hill a blessing. I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing. Ezek.34:11-36

See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young. Is.40:10-11

We are all under-shepherds who have delegated responsibility for God’s flock—however, some have greater responsibility than others, according to God’s calling and gifting.

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: 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.5:1-5

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” Matt.9:36-38

How do we feed Jesus’ sheep?

We feed Jesus’ sheep by doing all we can to help them become mature Christians.

We will feed and care for others practically as we are able, but we will especially feed and care for others spiritually by praying for them and encouraging them to trust God and grow into mature Believers.

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. 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 people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

respect the mature body of 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

A mature Christian is able to trust God in difficult times because they have learnt to trust Him in the good times.

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, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so. Heb.5:13-6:3

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

Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete [mature] in all the will of God. Col.4:12

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. 1Cor.2:6-7

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

A mature Christian will also help others to trust God—"what I have received from the Lord, I pass on to you"!!.

23/04/2025

Psalm 134

Video:

How Do You Love Your Enemy When Your Enemy Hasn't Repented

Questions

What Jesus was like before His resurrection (*i.e.* in His mortal body).

What Jesus is like after His resurrection (*i.e.* in His immortal body)

Why is Jesus' resurrection important?

How do you imagine the final resurrection will be like?

How can we prepare for that final resurrection?

Comments

What Jesus was like before His resurrection (*i.e.* in His mortal body).

Jesus was like any other person. He was a baby, grew into a man, had emotions and normal bodily needs of food, drink and sleep

And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him... 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.2:40;51-52

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Son though he was, 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

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. Lk.19:31-42

Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" Jn.11:35-36

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.1:9

fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Heb.12:2

After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. Matt.4:2

The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. Mk.11:12

Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." Jn.19:28

Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. Jn.4:6

Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent. He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Mk.4:5

"Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.' " The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. Matt.21:5-7

"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." Matt.11:28-30

What Jesus is like after His resurrection (*i.e.* in His immortal body).

After His resurrection Jesus was no longer restricted by physical limitations. He could eat but did not need to. He could appear and disappear. He was recognisable and yet sometime hid His identity.

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

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hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” Jn.20:26-28

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 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.”

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence. Lk.24:36-43

When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God. Lk.24:50-53

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” Acts.1:9-11

After His ascension, Jesus was glorified which gave Him a further distinction

On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: “Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.” I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. The hair on his head was 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 coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. Rev.1:10-18

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. 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. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. Acts.9:1-9

Why is Jesus' resurrection important?

Without Jesus' resurrection, we would still be in our sins and if we say Jesus was raised from the dead, we call God a liar because God has raised Him from the dead

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance *: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. 1Cor.15:3-8

But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 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,

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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 of all people most to be pitied.

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in 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. 1Cor.15:12-24

What do you imagine the final resurrection will be like?

We should not confuse the Lord's coming with the Lord's return! The expression "second coming" does not appear in the Bible!

For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Matt.24:27

The expression "as lightning flashes from the east to the west" is a very deliberate order of direction. In essence it refers to God redemptively intervening into the affairs of man. This expression occurs nowhere else in Scripture. "Lightning" is often associated with the *presence of God* (note Exodus 20:18; Daniel 10:6). Thus it appears that Christ is saying that He will manifest His presence and intervene redemptively into our world.

Sun, Moon & Stars

Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Matthew 24:29

The expression *sun, moon, and stars* is a metaphor for Israel. This expression is first used in Genesis 37:9 where he describes Israel as the *sun, moon, and stars*.

Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me." Gen.37:9

Isaiah uses exactly the same expression about Israel to give reason why God was about to use Babylon to judge them.

For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine. Is.13:10

When the Bible says that the sun does not give forth its light, the stars fall from sky, and moon does not give forth its light, it is saying that **Israel has abandoned God**. In this verse in Matthew 24, Christ is saying that Israel is about to be judged because they have abandoned God.

Sign Of The Son Of Man

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Matt.24:30

It's eye opening to realise what this verse does not say. It does not say that Christ will appear on the earth. Again Christ is using Old Testament language to convey His message:

I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Dan.7:13

Christ appears to be quoting Daniel 7:13. This verse gives us increased insight into what Christ is saying in Matthew 24:30. Many have assumed that Christ is describing His *descent to earth*. But these verses actually describe an **ascent to the Father** (*the Ancient of Days*). This is why we must reject links made between *1 Thessalonians 4:17*, which **describes Christ descent**, and *Matthew 24:30*. **They are two separate events!** Christ is stating (and Daniel 7:13 affirms), that His *parousia* will be with the clouds of Heaven—not earth!

The expression "*the Lord coming on the clouds*" and its variants are Old Testament metaphors describing God judging a nation. These times are often described as a day of the Lord.

He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters; He makes the clouds His chariot; He walks upon the wings of the wind; He makes the winds His messengers, Flaming fire His ministers. Ps.104:3-4

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"Behold, he goes up like clouds, And his chariots like the whirlwind; His horses are swifter than eagles. Woe to us, for we are ruined!" Jer.4:13

For the day is near, Even the day of the LORD is near; It will be a day of clouds, A time of doom for the nations. Ez.30:3

What is also enlightening is the following verse in Daniel 7 from where Christ is quoting. It is my conviction that Christ is describing the close of the Old Covenant and the beginning of His Kingdom on earth (not a "millennial reign" but a New Covenant Kingdom). Otherwise Matthew 16:28 not only makes no sense, it actually makes Christ a liar!

Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. Matt.16:28

Although the phrase "second coming of Christ" does not occur in the Bible, Jesus was adamant that He would return to judge all the living and the dead (thus the need for the Resurrection) at the end of time.

Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Jn.5:25-27

He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him; the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. Jn.12:48

And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. Acts 10:42

I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: 2Tim.4:1

The return of Jesus at the final resurrection will be quick, visible, loud and final

For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 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 one another with these words. 1Thess.4:14-18

How can we prepare for that final resurrection?

God wants faithful servants

"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

And God expects faithfulness

This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. [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

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. 1Pet.4:10

Since an overseer manages God's household, 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. [For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word

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as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.]Tit.1:7-9

We need to stay faithful and in fellowship with God, His Word and His people.

Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. 1Cor.1:7-9

They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath. 1Thess.1:9-10

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you. Tit.2:11-15

But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying 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 21-22

16/04/2025

Psalm 133

Video: *Do Faith and Logic Contradict*_

Questions

What is Jesus like?

How important is it that our praise and prayers harmonise with the New Covenant?

What does it mean to be righteous?

Why does it matter if we doubt what God has done for us?

How can we build our faith?

Why is it important that God's Word dwells in us?

Comments

What is Jesus like?

Jesus is like the Father

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Jn.14:6-10

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. Heb.1:3

Then Jesus cried out, "Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me. Jn.12:44-45

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 2Cor.4:4

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. Col1:15

Jesus is full of Grace and Truth

The Word became a human being. He made his home with us. We have seen his glory. It is the glory of the one and only Son. He came from the Father. And he was full of grace and truth.^{Jn.1:14}

Jesus is humble (meek) and gentle

By the humility and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you—I, Paul, who am "timid" when face to face with you, but "bold" toward you when away! 2Cor.10:1

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." Matt.11:21

Jesus is now glorified

*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*

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. Jn.17:1-5

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you

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believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God. 1Pet.1:18-21

*I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, * dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. The hair on his head was 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 coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. Rev.1:12-18*

How important is it that our praise and prayers harmonise with the New Covenant?

It is essential

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." Jn.4:23-24

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

Faith comes from hearing the Word of God and if we are going to live by faith we need to speak according to God's Word.

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ. Rom.10:17

God's will is in our spirit. God's will and God's Word are the same

"What more can David say to you? For you know your servant, Sovereign LORD. For the sake of your word and according to your will, you have done this great thing and made it known to your servant. 2Sam.7:20-21

Then I said, 'Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, my God.' Heb.10:7

At conversion God puts His Spirit and His Word/Will into our spirit

For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. 1Pet.1:23

This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. Heb.8:10

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. 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. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do. Jas.1:19-25

The Church (all Believers) are "married" to Jesus

"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 God's holy people.) Then the angel said to me, "Write this: 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. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God..." "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." 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. Rev.21:2-3;9-10

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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

At marriage the two become united (one flesh). At conversion (spiritual marriage), we our spirit becomes united with God's Spirit

But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit. 1Cor.6:17

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate [partakers] in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 2Pet.1:3-4

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. [You were taught with reference to your former way of life to lay aside the old man who is being corrupted in accordance with deceitful desires, to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and to put on the new man who has been created in God's image – in righteousness and holiness that comes from truth.] Eph.4:22-24

Our will (where we make decisions, choices) is in our soul—which is why we need to make our soul obedient to God's Spirit that joined to our righteous spirit. And so our communication with God must be spiritual (spirit to Spirit) and true (factually accurate)

What does it mean to be righteous?

To be righteous means that we are right with God;

"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: "Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them." Rom.4:3-8

We have the same character (nature) as Jesus—this happens at conversion where we are born-again or born from above

Yet to all who did receive 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

Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." Jn.3:3-8

However, our mind must be must be saved and renewed—this is called maturity or growing up in the faith (learning how to live as children of God)

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 [save your soul]. Jas.1:21

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.12:2

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 you were taught to be made new in your hearts [the spirit/ attitude of your minds], to become [put on; clothe yourself with] the new self [person; or Man; become like Christ]. That new person is created to be like God [or in God's image; according to God]—truly good and holy [or in the righteousness and holiness that comes from truth]. Expanded Bible

Why does it matter if we doubt what God has done for us?

Double minded people have no assurance and no certainty

But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do. Jas.1:6-8

Double minded people make an outward show but are not fully persuaded in their heart

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. Jas.4:7-8

Double minded people give up easily and revert back to their old way of thinking

My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end. I hate double-minded people, but I love your law. You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word. Ps.119:12-14

How can we build our faith?

Pray in the Spirit

But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying 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.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

Have difficulties

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

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 nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins. 2Pet.1:5-9

Be fully persuaded in our hearts.

Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. ^{1Jn.3:18-23}

A more literal translation of vs 19 is: And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure [lit. persuade] our hearts before Him.

When we can persuade our heart about what God says about us we will speak and act like the citizen of heaven that we really are. God knows everything and even if we feel guilty, He is greater than our feelings; if our conscience condemns us, we will be reassured because He is greater than our conscience. We need to persuade our heart that we are right before God, but righteousness is not just about being right with God—righteousness is the very life of God within us because Jesus is our Righteousness

Why is it important that God's Word dwells in us?

God's Word in our heart stops us sinning

How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Praise be to you, LORD; teach me your decrees. With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. Ps.119:9-13

God's Word in our heart saves us

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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 [lit. save your soul]. Jas.1:21

Our heart is the combination of spirit and soul. Our spirit is saved when it is born again and so a Believer's spirit is already holy. Our soul is our psyche—it is our will, emotions and intellect, the place of decision, where we make our choices. We need to make our soul submissive to our spirit

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. My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you Ps.42:5-6

Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits— who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. Ps.103:1-5

09/04/2025

Psalm 132

Video: *What Will Heaven Be Like*_

Questions

What does “Messiah” (Christ) mean?

In what way is Jonah a sign that Jesus is the Messiah

Should Christian seek a “sign” from God?

Why does God save bad people?

Why do some people respond to the Gospel and others don't?

Comments

What does “Messiah” (Christ) mean?

Messiah or Christ means “Anointed One” and in the OT refers to God's servant

If the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, he must bring to the LORD a young bull without defect as a sin offering for the sin he has committed. Lev.4:3

And what happens to your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will be a sign to you—they will both die on the same day. I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind. I will firmly establish his priestly house, and they will minister before my anointed one always. 1Sam.2:34-35

For the sake of your servant David, do not reject your anointed one. The LORD swore an oath to David, a sure oath he will not revoke: “One of your own descendants I will place on your throne. If your sons keep my covenant and the statutes I teach them, then their sons will sit on your throne for ever and ever.” For the LORD has chosen Zion, he has desired it for his dwelling, saying, “This is my resting place for ever and ever; here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it. Ps.132:9-14

This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armour, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: Is.41:5

Although the theme of God's promised Redeemer (Messiah) is throughout the OT only a few direct uses of the word the Messiah (Anointed One) applies to Jesus

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the LORD and against his anointed, Ps.2:1-2

Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. Dan.9:25

In the NT all 500 uses of the word “Christ” apply to Jesus

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Jn.1:40-42

But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called ‘teacher,’ for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Matt.23:8-12

In what way is Jonah a sign that Jesus is the Messiah

Jonah was dead for 3 days and nights and returned to life

Then some scribes and Pharisees said, “Teacher, we want you to show us a miraculous sign.” He responded, “The people of an evil and unfaithful era look for a miraculous sign. But the only sign they will get is the sign of the prophet Jonah. Just as Jonah was in the belly of a huge fish for three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.” Matt.12:38-40

Jonah also came from Nazareth, evangelised, fell asleep in a storm and caused the storm to end.

Should Christians seek a “sign” from God?

Faith doesn't need a sign because it is the evidence of what we can't see

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Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. [Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.] Heb.11:1-2

Jesus said it was “wicked and adulterous” people who seek a sign. The Jews were God’s Covenant people and should have welcomed Jesus with open arms and an open heart. However, there were many signs that Jesus was the Christ

If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.' ” Again the LORD spoke to Ahaʒ, “Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.” But Ahaʒ said, “I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test.” Then Isaiah said, “Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. He will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, for before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste. The LORD will bring on you and on your people and on the house of your father a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah—he will bring the king of Assyria.” Is.7:9-17

Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Lk.2:11-12

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. I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' “Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. Acts.2:17-22

Paul says that the Jews look for a sign but Jesus is the sign

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 1Cor.1:21-24

Gideon asked for a sign but even when God gave the sign, he did not trust it!

Gideon replied, “If now I have found favour in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me. Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you.” And the LORD said, “I will wait until you return.” Gideon went inside, prepared a young goat, and from an ephah of flour he made bread without yeast. Putting the meat in a basket and its broth in a pot, he brought them out and offered them to him under the oak. The angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened bread, place them on this rock, and pour out the broth.” And Gideon did so. Then the angel of the LORD touched the meat and the unleavened bread with the tip of the staff that was in his hand. Fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread. And the angel of the LORD disappeared. When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the LORD, he exclaimed, “Alas, Sovereign LORD! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!” But the LORD said to him, “Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die.” So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it The LORD Is Peace... Gideon said to God, “If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised— look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said.” And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew—a bowlful of water. Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece, but this time make the fleece dry and let the ground be covered with dew.” That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew. Jdg.6:17-24;36-40

The Church was birthed in signs and wonders

Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” Acts.4:29-30

The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. Acts.5:12

At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed. But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders. The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles. Acts.14:1-4

The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them... 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 wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. Rom.15:12;7-19

But tongues are a sign for unbelievers not for Believers

Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults. In the Law it is written: “With other tongues and through the lips of foreigners, I will speak to this people, but even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord.” Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is not for unbelievers but for believers. So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and inquirers or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? But if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying, they are convicted of sin and are brought under judgment by all, as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare. So they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, “God is really among you!” 1Cor.14:20-25

Not all signs and wonders are from God

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. 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. 1Thes.2:9-12

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “When Pharaoh says to you, ‘Perform a miracle,’ then say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh,’ and it will become a snake.” So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake. Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts: Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. Yet Pharaoh's heart became hard and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said. Ex.7:8-13

Why does God save bad people?

Because there are no good people! We are all “bad” i.e. none of us is righteous—we have all sinned

For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. As it is written: “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.”

This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. Rom.3:9-12;22-24

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

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Why should I fear when evil days come, when wicked deceivers surround me—those who trust in their wealth and boast of their great riches? No one can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for them— the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough— so that they should live on forever and not see decay. Ps.49:5-9

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.53:5-6

Why do some people respond to the Gospel and others don't?

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

They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. He witnessed to them from morning till evening, explaining about the kingdom of God, and from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets he tried to persuade them about Jesus. Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe. Act.28:23-24

We have a mind and a choice—we are responsible for our response to God. Although God has done His part, we still need to respond to the Gospel and receive God's forgiveness.

Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me. 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. Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.' Jn.15:20-25

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, 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 people 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. Rom.1:18-21

Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?" 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.9:35-41

The doctrines of Calvinism include irresistible grace—the five points of Calvinism are found in the acronym **TULIP**

Total depravity of mankind

Unconditional election

Limited atonement

Irresistible grace

Perseverance of the saints

While these statements are all true, that is God's concern. Our concern is to respond to God's grace—and everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord (in faith) will be saved.

Many are called but few are chosen

"Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 'Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.' "So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. "But when the

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. "So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' "For many are called, but few are chosen." Matt.22:8-14

"I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. —

Jn.13:18

However, we can be both called and chosen

They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers." Rev.17:14

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.22:17

This day I call the heavens and the 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, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Deut.30:19-20

02/04/2025

Psalm 132

Video: Why Some Christians Are More Influenced by Culture than by Christ—And What to Do About It
Questions

What sort of prayers are there?

Why should we ask God for daily bread?

Is God's forgiveness conditional or unconditional?

What is temptation?

How does God deliver us from the evil one?

Is there anything that God cannot do?

What can we do to bring heaven to earth?

Comments

What sort of prayers are there?

There are many types of prayer, such as praise, petition and intercession; there is public prayer where people pray together, either collectively or individually, one at a time or all together; there is personal prayer where there is no one but the person and God.

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ^{Matt.6:6}

When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit..." ^{Acts.4:24-25}

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. ^{1Tim.2:1-4}

But whenever we pray, we must have faith in God and we must pray with thanksgiving.

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}

"Have faith in God." Jesus answered. "Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. 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 them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." ^{Mk.11:22-25}

Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so. ^{Heb.6:1-3}

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. 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.4:4-7}

Why should we ask God for daily bread?

To acknowledge that we are dependent upon God for our life

You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD himself, is the Rock eternal... LORD, you establish peace for us; all that we have accomplished you have done for us. ^{Is.26:3-12}

But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today. ^{Deut.8:18}

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Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labour in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves. Ps.127:1-2

When we ask God to provide we should always thank Him too—as Jesus did and Paul

Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. ^{Lk.9:16}

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ^{Lk.24:30}

After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. ^{Acts.27:35}

But our daily bread is more than the physical food we eat—we should ask God for our spiritual food:

After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” ^{Matt.4:2-4}

Our spiritual food is God’s Word and God’s Work:

I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread. ^{Job.23:12}

Meanwhile his disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat something.” But he said to them, “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.” ^{Jn.4:31-35}

And the most important work God wants us to do is to believe in Jesus:

Jesus answered, “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}

Is God’s forgiveness conditional or unconditional?

Forgiveness is unconditional (because it is by grace);

But because of his great love for us, 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, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. ^{Eph.2:4-9}

Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. ^{Rom.4:16}

Restoration is conditional on repentance. which involves at least a determination to change

“If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying ‘I repent,’ you must forgive them.” 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.17:3-6}

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.

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Forgiveness is a clean slate; restoration is keeping the slate clean.

Forgiveness is mending what was broken; Restoration is making it work again.

What is temptation?

Temptation and testing is the same word in Greek, and depending on the motive means to try or prove (in a good sense) or tempt, *i.e.* solicit to sin (in a bad sense)

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load. Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor. Gal.6:1-6

Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. Lk.8:13

Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." Lk.22:29-32

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

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. 1Pet.4:12-13

"To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth. I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them 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 them my new name. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Rev.3:7-13

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. 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 endure it. 1Cor.10:11-13

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

How does God deliver us from the evil one?

When Jesus died on the cross, He defeated the devil and destroyed his work (his dominance and power over Believers)

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in [Jesus], and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. 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

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

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, and do not move 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.1:19-23

Christ forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. Col.2:13-15

Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die. Jn.12:30-33

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

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 given us authority over the devil (i.e. the ability and power to resist his temptations)

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

“Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the LORD Almighty. “Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves. Then you will trample on the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act,” says the LORD Almighty. Mal.4:1-3

But if we fall (yield to temptation) **we have an Advocate** who picks us up and gets us going again.

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 is not in us. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—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

Is there anything that God cannot do?

“Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you... Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: “I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me? Jer.32:17-27

But God cannot sin. There are many other things that God will not do, such as deny Himself, go against His Word,

People swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. 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 set before 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 our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek. Heb.6:16-20

Then he spoke his message: “Arise, Balak, and listen; hear me, son of Zippor. God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill? I have received a command to bless; he has blessed, and I cannot change it. “No misfortune is seen in Jacob, no misery observed in Israel. The LORD their God is with them; the shout of the King is among them. Nu.23:18-21

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Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself. 2Tim.2:11-13

What can we do to bring heaven to earth?

Live in the atmosphere of heaven

Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest. Heb.3:1

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

For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior 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.3:18-21

John learnt to be “*in the Spirit*”

On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said:... Rev.1:10

At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. Rev.4:2

the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me. Col.1:26-29

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. Phil.4:8-9

26/03/2025

Psalm 131

Video: Mike Petzer 2023 – 75

Questions

What is prayer?

To whom should we address our prayers?

Does it matter how we pray?

Does God always hear our prayers?

What sort of Kingdom is God's Kingdom?

What are the responsibilities of belonging to God's Kingdom?

Comments

What is prayer?

Prayer is communicating with God

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed;
the motion of a hidden fire that trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech that infant lips can try,
prayer the sublimest strains that reach the Majesty on high.

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath, the Christian's native air,
his watchword at the gates of death: he enters heaven with prayer.

Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice, returning from his ways;
while angels in their songs rejoice, and cry, 'Behold, he prays!'

The saints in prayer appear as one, in word and deed and mind;
while with the Father and the Son sweet fellowship they find.

Nor prayer is made on earth alone: the Holy Spirit pleads,
and Jesus on the eternal throne for sinners intercedes.

O Thou by whom we come to God, the Life, the Truth, the Way,
the path of prayer thyself hast trod: Lord, teach us how to pray!

James Montgomery (author of "Angels from the realms of glory"):

When we pray, we can rely on Jesus Christ, who is always praying for us and with us. Christ's praying on our behalf is what makes our prayers true prayer. Prayer is not fundamentally about us pouring out our words, our hearts, or our emotions to God... When we pray "*in Jesus' name*," we acknowledge that our prayers depend on Jesus Christ, which gives us freedom. When we're not tangibly aware of God's presence in prayer, it's okay. We are always connected by the Spirit to Jesus' ongoing ministry of prayer, whether we feel it or not. When prayer doesn't deliver the sense of intimacy we are expecting, we can find joy in knowing that our union with Christ is secure. *Kristen Deede Johnson, "Our Theology of Prayer Matters More than Our Feelings."*

When we pray, we must hold fast and believe that God has heard our prayer. It was for this reason that the ancients defined prayer as an *Ascensus mentis ad Deum*, "a climbing up of the heart unto God." *Martin Luther*

When we pray, we are expressing our dependence on God (c.f. many of the Psalms). *Andrew Corbett*
A friend of mine defines prayer as "*a declaration of dependence*." Prayer is powerful, but if our prayers are aimless, meaningless and mingled with doubt, they will be of little hope to us. *Billy Graham*

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Prayer is never simply a matter of talking to God. It is trusting Him with our concerns. There are times when we might be anxious about children, family, and friends and there is much that we might worry about—their spiritual well-being, schooling, health, friendships, living arrangements, work. Needless to say, anxious thoughts are seldom productive and frequently only serve to intensify our level of worry. In seeking to transform anxiety into prayer, it is not simply a matter of talking to God instead of talking to ourselves, for that may simply result in talking anxiously to God. Rather we are challenged to recognize the limitations of our worrying and the possibilities of what prayer can do. Prayer isn't a "*spare wheel*" you pull out when in trouble, it's a "*steering wheel*" that directs the right path throughout your life. When we lose hope and think it's the end, God smiles and says, "*It's just a bend, not the end*".

To whom should we address our prayers?

Jesus always addressed His prayers to God—and addressed God as His Father

At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do. Matt.11:25-26

Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." Matt.26:39

Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." Jn.11:41

"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them." Jn.17:24-25

Because God is a Trinity of 3 Persons, we can address our prayers to Father, Son or Holy Spirit but Jesus is our Teacher and Model and we do well to follow His instruction and example.

"This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, Matt.6:9

I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. 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.1:16-17

The early Church prayed to God the Father

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. Eph.3:14-17

When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord, you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ...Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus." Acts.4:24-30

But there are also examples in the NT of Believers praying to Jesus:

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.7:59-60

"When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance and saw the Lord speaking to me. 'Quick!' he said. 'Leave Jerusalem immediately, because the people here will not accept your testimony about me.'

*"Lord,' I replied, 'these people know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you. And when the blood of your martyr * Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.'*

"Then the Lord said to me, 'Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.' Acts.22:17-21

The Holy Spirit intercedes for us and so we can speak to Him in our prayers too.

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In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God. Rom.8:26-27

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Eph.6:18

Does it matter how we pray?

Yes! Unbelievers have no assurance that God will hear their prayers but neither does a double-minded person have any confidence that God hears their prayer

But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do. Jas.1:6-8

Nevertheless, God will always hear an unbeliever's prayer of repentance

As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes 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

We must pray “believing”—that is having faith/trust/confidence in God.

Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer." Matt.21:21-22

"Have faith in God," Jesus answered. "Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. 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 them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." Mk.11:22-27

This is not “name it and claim it” but having a confidence in God to do as He has said. The problem with most people is they don't know what God has said—the only think they know but they haven't really studied the Scriptures in the context of the New Covenant to find out what God has actually said.

Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. Matt.22:29

Prayer only works if God answers it!

Does God always hear our prayers?

God always hears our prayers but we must be “righteous” (i.e. a Believer) if our prayers are to be effective

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. Jas.5:16

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

The LORD detests the sacrifice of the wicked, but the prayer of the upright pleases him... The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous. ^{Pron.15:8;29}

If anyone turns a deaf ear to my instruction, even their prayers are detestable. ^{Pron.28:9}

What sort of Kingdom is God's Kingdom?

God's Kingdom is a spiritual Kingdom

Jesus answered, "My kingdom doesn't belong to this world. If my kingdom belonged to this world, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. My kingdom doesn't have its origin on earth." Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus replied, "You're correct in saying that I'm a king. I have been born and have come into the world for this reason: to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to me." ^{Jn.18:33-37}

God's Kingdom is the reign of Jesus in people's hearts.

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The Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God would come. He answered them, "People can't observe the coming of the kingdom of God. They can't say, 'Here it is!' or 'There it is!' You see, the kingdom of God is within you."^{Lk.17:20-21}

Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart."^{Matt.13:18-19} T

What are the responsibilities of belonging to God's Kingdom?

The values of God's Kingdom are the same as the values of God—that is, His character:

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.5:19-23}

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

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}

And so to live as honourable citizens of God's Kingdom we must behave like God

For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior 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.4:18-21}

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. 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. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.^{Eph.2:17-20}

We should always think, talk, and act as a Believer

19/03/2025

Psalm 130

Video: Mike Petzer 2023 – 70

Questions

How do we inherit eternal life?

What does it mean to love God?

What does it mean to love our neighbour?

What was significant about the places in the story of the Good Samaritan?

How does the Good Samaritan help the robbed man?

How does Jesus help us?

Comments

How do we inherit eternal life?

We inherit eternal life through a personal faith/trust in Jesus Christ. This is a gift and we cannot earn it—it has to be received

But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of 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

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

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become God's children, to those who believe in his name: John 1:12

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. Col.2:6-7

Eternal life comes from knowing God and Jesus Christ

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. Jn.17:1-3

Eternal life could come from keeping God's Law—if it was kept completely

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered, " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' " "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." Lk.10:25-28

If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God: ... However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: Deut.28:1-15

The Law was good but was temporary

Then what was the purpose of the law? It was added because of human sin. And it was supposed to control us until the promised Seed had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a go-between. A go-between does not take sides. God didn't use a go-between when he made his promise to Abraham. But the same God was at work in both the law and the promise. So is the law opposed to God's promises? Certainly not! What if a law had been given that could give life? Then people could become right with God by obeying the law. 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. Before faith in Christ came, we were held prisoners by the law. We were locked up until faith was made known. So the law was put in charge until Christ came. He came so that we might be made right with God by believing in Christ. But now faith in Christ has come. So we are no longer under the control of the law. Gal.3:19-25

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The Law only brought condemnation *Those who belong to Christ Jesus are no longer under God's sentence. I am now controlled by the law of the Holy Spirit. That law gives me life because of what Christ Jesus has done. It has set me free from the law of sin that brings death. The written law was made weak by our sinful nature. But God did what the written law could not do. He made his Son to be like those who have a sinful nature. He sent him to be an offering for sin. In that way, he judged sin in his Son's human body. Now we can do everything the law requires. Our sinful nature no longer controls the way we live. The Holy Spirit now controls the way we live. Rom.8:1-4*

Eternal life cannot come from keeping the Law because no one can keep it completely

Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments." "Which ones?" he inquired. Jesus replied, " 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honour your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbour as yourself.' " "All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?" 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.19:16-21

For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. As it is written: "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." Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin. But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. Rom.3:6-15

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Rom.8:1-4

What does it mean to love God?

To love means to honour, cherish, obey, reverence, respect. Although love involves our emotions, it is much more than that. Love involves our whole person—spirit, soul and body.

"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.' Mk.12:29-30

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.12:24

But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul. Deut.4:29

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good? Deut.10:12-13

But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you: to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to keep his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul." Josh.22:5

What does it mean to love our neighbour?

Treat others as yourself

Do to others as you would have them do to you. Lk.6:31

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Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: 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? But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong? If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbour as yourself," you are doing right. But if you show favouritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, "You shall not commit adultery," also said, "You shall not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment. Jas.2:5-13

You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour. You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour. Ex.20:13-17

What was significant about the places in the story of the Good Samaritan?

Jerusalem—the city of God and the place where God would accept true worship

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Ps.46:4-5

"I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain." I will proclaim the LORD's decree: He said to me, "You are my son; today I have become your father. Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. Ps.2:6-8

How lovely is your dwelling place, LORD Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young— a place near your altar, LORD Almighty, my King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baka, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion. Ps.84:1-7

But you are to seek the place the LORD your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go; there bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. There, in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the LORD your God has blessed you. Deut.12:5-7

Then the angel of the LORD ordered Gad to tell David to go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. So David went up in obedience to the word that Gad had spoken in the name of the LORD. ... Then David said, "The house of the LORD God is to be here, and also the altar of burnt offering for Israel." So David gave orders to assemble the foreigners residing in Israel, and from among them he appointed stonecutters to prepare dressed stone for building the house of God. 1Chron.21:18-22:2

Jerusalem was founded on Mt Moriah

Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you." Gen.22:2

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

There 2 Jerusalems—the physical Jerusalem where our Lord was crucified and the spiritual Jerusalem where God resides and accepts true worship.

The physical Jerusalem is used figuratively in the NT to represent Judaism and apostasy.

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 public square of the great city—which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—where also their Lord was crucified. Rev.11:7-8

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? 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 according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise. These things are being taken figuratively: 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, barren woman, you who never bore a child; shout for joy and cry aloud, you who were never in labour; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband." Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise. At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. But what does 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 and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman. Gal.4:21-31

The Spiritual Jerusalem used figuratively in the NT to represent the Bride of Christ which is made up of all Believers (Old and New Covenants)

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. 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, to the spirits of the righteous 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.12:22-25

One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." 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. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.... One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." 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. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Rev.21:9-27

Jericho—a place of curse

At that time Joshua pronounced this solemn oath: "Cursed before the LORD is the one who undertakes to rebuild this city, Jericho: "At the cost of his firstborn son he will lay its foundations; at the cost of his youngest he will set up its gates." So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout the land. Josh.6:26-27

East and West

Bible symbolism, people always faced west to meet with God (and went east away from God)

Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; Gen.2:8

So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. Gen.3:23-24

Abraham pitched his tent between Bethel and Ai:

From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. Gen.12:8

Bethel means House of God

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it." He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

heaven.” Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz. Gen.28:16-19

Ai became a desolate place and represents the world

So Joshua burned Ai and made it a permanent heap of ruins, a desolate place to this day. Josh.8:28

The Tabernacle was pitched with the entrance on the east (so people faced west when they met God). Moses and Aaron and his sons were to camp to the east of the tabernacle, toward the sunrise, in front of the tent of meeting. They were responsible for the care of the sanctuary on behalf of the Israelites. Nu.3:38

The Temple was built with the entrance on the east. The glory of God left the Temple through the east Gate and returned from the east: *Then the glory of the LORD departed from over the threshold of the temple and stopped above the cherubim. While I watched, the cherubim spread their wings and rose from the ground, and as they went, the wheels went with them. They stopped at the entrance of the east gate of the LORD's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.* ^{Ezek.10:18-19} Then the man brought me to the gate facing east, and I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. His voice was like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was radiant with his glory. ^{Ezek.43:1-2}

Inn—a place of safety, where people are cared for, the Church. The Greek word comes from the same root as “joyful assembly”:

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. Heb.12:22

How does the Good Samaritan help the robbed man?

He binds up wounds, took him to a place of safety, paid for him and said he would return for him

How does Jesus help us?

In the same way!

Jesus pours in the oil and the wine (oil signifies the healing and anointing of the Holy Spirit).

“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 for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.” Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, *“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”* Lk.4:18-21

Jesus takes us to a place of safety—the Church.

Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. 1Tim.3:15-16

Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church. 1Cor.14:12

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

Jesus paid our debt.

Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. Matt.6:11

Jesus will return

*“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God *; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”* Jn.14:1-4

12/03/2025

Psalm 128

Video: Mike Petzer 2023 – 65

Questions

What are the core values of God's Kingdom?

What does God consider as successful?

How can we live as successful Christians?

How is the New Covenant better than the Old Covenant?

What does "righteousness" mean?

How do Christians become righteous?

Comments

What are the core values of God's Kingdom?

Fruit of the Spirit

But the spiritual nature produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There are no laws against things like that. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their corrupt nature along with its passions and desires. If we live by our spiritual nature, then our lives need to conform to our spiritual nature. We can't allow ourselves to act arrogantly and to provoke or envy each other. Gal.5:22-26

Faith Hope and Love

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy. ^{1Cor.13:13-14:1}

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. 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. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. ^{1Pet.4:8-11}

Faithfulness

Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. ^{1Cor.4:2}

Holiness

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}

Service and servanthood:

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." ^{Mk.10:42-45}

Jesus said to them, "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}

I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, 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}

Humility, gentleness and grace

Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light." Matt.11:28-30

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

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—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.2:1-11}

What does God consider as successful?

Being Faithful—Full of Faith, i.e. believing in Jesus

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.6:28-29}

Being Faithful—reliability and trustworthiness

Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.^{1Cor.4:2}

"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.25:23

How can we live as successful Christians?

By 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

Faith assures us of things we expect and convinces us of the existence of things we cannot see. God accepted our ancestors because of their faith. Faith convinces us that God created the world through his word. This means what can be seen was made by something that could not be seen. By faith... Heb.11:1-4

The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. Gal.5:6

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

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; 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

How is the New Covenant better than the Old Covenant?

New Covenant has better promises and better premises:

Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant.^{Heb.7:22}

The Old Covenant didn't work but the New Covenant does work!

But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises. For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people and said: "The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will establish with the people 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. No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. 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 outdated will soon disappear. Heb.8:6-13

What does "righteousness" mean?

Right with God. There is no barrier between us and God—no sin, guilt or shame

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

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, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. Col.1:22-23

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. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. Eph.1:3-5

Now all glory to God, who is able to keep you from falling away and will bring you with great joy into his glorious presence without a single fault. All glory to him who alone is God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord. All glory, majesty, power, and authority are his before all time, and in the present, and beyond all time! Amen. Jude 24-25

God has exchanged our sin for His righteousness

The Great Exchange

Sin: *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us* ^{2Cor.5:21}

Righteousness: *so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* ^{2Cor.5:21}

Punishment: *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.* ^{Is.53:5}

Forgiveness: *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.* ^{Eph.1:7}

Rejection: *About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* ^{Matt.27:46}

Acceptance: *to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves (to the praise of the glory of his grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved* ^{NKJV}). ^{Eph.1:6}

Shame: *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.* ^{Heb.12:2}

Glory: *In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.* ^{Heb.2:10}

Death: *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* ^{Rom.5:8}

Life: *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* ^{Rom.6:23}

Poverty: *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor* ^{2Cor.8:9}

Riches: *so that you through his poverty might become rich.* ^{2Cor.8:9}

Sickness: *He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.* ^{Matt.8:17}

Health: *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.* ^{1Pet.2:24}

Curse: *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree".* ^{Gal.3:13}

Blessing: *He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.* ^{Gal.3:14}

Believing God

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. What does Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." ... Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all... The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification... Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Rom.4:1-5:2

When we place our trust in God, He credits us with Jesus 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
For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.” Rom.1:17*

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

I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, 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 on the basis of faith. Phil.3:8-9

05/03/2025

Psalm 127

Video: Mike Petzer 2023 – 60

Questions

What is a Christian?

What does it mean to follow Christ?

Why did the early Believers struggle to accept non-Jews into the Church?

Why should we listen to Jesus?

How does Jesus speak to us?

What is Jesus saying to us?

Comments

What is a Christian?

A Christian is a follower of Christ. (I following Christ — Christ-I-an)

A Christian is under Christ's authority—they confess that Jesus is Lord

A Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit

A Christian a member of God's Family—God is their Father, Jesus is their Elder Brother, the Holy Spirit is their Counsellor

A Christian has been born again of the incorruptible seed of the Word of God

A Christian has been united with God in spirit

A Christian has been forgiven of all their sin

A Christian has been credited with Jesus' righteousness and has been made righteous

A Christian is a citizen of heaven

A Christian belongs to God's Kingdom

A Christian has died to their old life and been made alive with Christ

A Christian has eternal life

A Christian is an Ambassador for Christ

A Christian has the mind of Christ

However, we should be sure that we are who we say we are by regularly taking a spiritual health check:

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. 2Cor.13:5-6

Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. 1Cor.11:28

Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day. 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.1:12-14

What does it mean to follow Christ?

To follow Christ means to forsake your own life (desires, priorities)

Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it. ^{Matt.10:38-39}

In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples. Lk.14:33

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, 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 on the basis of faith. Phil.3:7-9

To follow Christ means putting God's Kingdom first

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

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. Matt.6:33-34

Why did the early Believers struggle to accept non-Jews into the Church?

They were Jews who had more than a 1000 years of religious tradition behind them (which is why Jesus said that they must be born again before they could see the Kingdom of God)

With the Temple and all its rituals and paraphernalia still in place, it was very difficult for them to shake off their past, their religious thinking.

Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah. Acts.5:42

When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied: "I know that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation; so I gladly make my defence. You can easily verify that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple, or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me. However, I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, 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.

"After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings. I was ceremonially clean when they found me in the temple courts doing this. There was no crowd with me, nor was I involved in any disturbance. But there are some Jews from the province of Asia, who ought to be here before you and bring charges if they have anything against me. Or these who are here should state what crime they found in me when I stood before the Sanhedrin— unless it was this one thing I shouted as I stood in their presence: 'It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today.' " Acts.24:10-21

Even in Revelation, John was told to measure the Temple

I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, with its worshipers. 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

It was easier for Paul to shake off the rituals of Judaism than the Disciples because he had only met Jesus in His resurrected and glorified state—the Disciples grew up with Jesus and were used to Him as a devout Jew under Judaism.

Stephen grasped the New Covenant

Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, "We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God." 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." All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel. Acts.6:11-16

Peter understood in part but then went back to his old ways!

While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?" Acts.10:27

When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs? "We who are Jews by birth and not sinful

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Gentiles know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified. Gal.2:11-16

Why should we listen to Jesus?

God said that we should listen to Jesus

A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." Lk.9:35

Jesus is God's Son whom He loves

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

Jesus is always true (right, correct) and is the embodiment of wisdom

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. Jn.14:6

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

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

How does Jesus speak to us?

Jesus speaks to us by the Holy Spirit 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

The Holy Spirit speaks into our heart—our spirit or soul—

Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me. Ps.42:7

Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." Jn.3:5-8

However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived"—the things God has prepared for those who love him—these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so 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, 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.2:9-16

but the Holy Spirit always in harmony with the Word of God.

As soon as it was night, the believers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. 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.17:10-12

"When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. Jn.15:26-27

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will

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receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.”Jn.16:13-15

That is why we must know what the Bible really says and not get distracted with superstition, myths, old wives' tales, or any other form of deception.

As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, 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. 1Tim.1:3-4

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 and sisters, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on 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; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance. That is why we labour and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe. 1Tim.4:1-10

Unfortunately, some Christians are too easily deceived (mostly because they are not Bible literate) and get extremely emotional and passionate about anything that is not in the clear Bible teaching of God's Kingdom—and they are proven wrong time after time but they never repent of their errors. Instead they just go on to the next silly idea!

Keep reminding God's people of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling 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. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some. 2Tim.2:14-18

What is Jesus saying to us?

When Jesus speaks to us it is Spirit to spirit and we need to hear from our spirit what He is saying. Of course it may be about something physical, mental or emotional as well as spiritual, such as a warning, some wisdom, encouragement, etc.

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. 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. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.Rev.2:1-7

God warns, guides, counsels, encourages, instructs us 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

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

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

The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. "Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod." They discussed this with one another and said, "It is because we have no bread." Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" "Twelve," they replied. "And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" They answered, "Seven." He said to them, "Do you still not understand?" Mk.8:14-21

They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: "The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors when he said through Isaiah the prophet: " 'Go to this people and say, "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving." For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.' "Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!" Acts.28:25-28

26/02/2025

Psalm 126

Video: Mike Petzer 2023 – 50? 55

Questions

In what way is God's kingdom like a garden?

How is the Word of God like a seed?

How is our heart like the ground?

What sort of harvest can we expect?

What can we do to produce the best harvest?

Comments

In what way is God's kingdom like a garden?

God's Kingdom is alive and growing

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this. Is.9:6-7

You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." Lk.1:31-33

"In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. "The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy." Dan.2:44-45

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. The LORD is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does. Ps.145:13

God's Kingdom has a Gardener (and also under-gardeners)

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. Jn.15:1-4

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 from it you will certainly die." Gen.2:15-17

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. Matt.20:1*

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." Matt.9:37-38

God's Kingdom has a sowing and reaping

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. 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.6:7-10

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: "They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their

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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. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. 2Cor.6:2-11

A wicked person earns deceptive wages, but the one who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward. Prov.11:18

Sow righteousness for yourselves, reap the fruit of unfailing love, Hos.10:12

“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 labour.” Jn.4:34-38

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.3:17-18

How is the Word of God like a seed?

God's Word has integral life

For no word from God will ever fail [For with God nothing will be impossible. Literally “no word from God shall be void of power”]. Lk.1:37

God's Word grows by itself

This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come. ^{Mk.4:26-29}

God's Word will produce more seeds

Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown.” ... 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.8:8;15

But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. ^{Matt.13:23}

How is our heart like the ground?

Our heart is the organ that pumps our blood around our body and is essential to life. In the Bible “heart” can refer to our spirit or soul (depending on the context) because both are critical to our life.

Our heart is the wellspring of life

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips. Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you. Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm. Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil. Prov.4:23-27

Our heart can be receptive or hard

*Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me... My sacrifice, O God, is * a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise. Ps.51:10;17*

Teach me your way, LORD, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever. For great is your love toward me; Ps.86:11-13

Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by eating ceremonial foods, which is of no benefit to those who do so. We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat. Heb.13:9-10

I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people. Phile.6-7

May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance. 2Thess.2:5

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We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them. In the past, he let all nations go their own way. Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.” Acts.14:15-17

And the word of the LORD came again to Zechariah: “This is what the LORD Almighty said: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.’ “But they refused to pay attention; stubbornly they turned their backs and covered their ears. They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the LORD Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the LORD Almighty was very angry. “ ‘When I called, they did not listen; so when they called, I would not listen,’ says the LORD Almighty. I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations, where they were strangers. The land they left behind them was so desolate that no one travelled through it. This is how they made the pleasant land desolate.’ ” Zech.7:8-14

Yet you, LORD, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. Is.64:8

Then the word of the LORD came to me. He said, “Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?” declares the LORD. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel. If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it. “Now therefore say to the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, ‘This is what the LORD says: Look! I am preparing a disaster for you and devising a plan against you. So turn from your evil ways, each one of you, and reform your ways and your actions.’ But they will reply, ‘It’s no use. We will continue with our own plans; we will all follow the stubbornness of our evil hearts.’ ” Jer.18:5-12

How the precious children of Zion, once worth their weight in gold, are now considered as pots of clay, the work of a potter’s hands! Even jackals offer their breasts to nurse their young, but my people have become heartless like ostriches in the desert. Because of thirst the infant’s tongue sticks to the roof of its mouth; the children beg for bread, but no one gives it to them. Lam.4:2-4

Our heart is where seeds are planted

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

What sort of harvest can we expect?

We can expect a good harvest if we have good soil (heart) and good seed (the Word of God)

Our harvest will be righteousness

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 enriched 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

best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. “Make level paths for your feet,” so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed. Heb.12:10-13

Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness. Jas.3:18

A wicked person earns deceptive wages, but the one who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward. Prov.11:18

The fruit of that righteousness will be peace; its effect will be quietness and confidence forever. My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest. Though hail flattens the forest and the city is levelled completely, how blessed you will be, sowing your seed by every stream, and letting your cattle and donkeys range free. Is.32:17-20

Sow righteousness for yourselves, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unploughed ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers his righteousness on you. Hos.10:12

What can we do to produce the best harvest?

God gives the increase but we must do the sowing and watering

You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans? For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere human beings? What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labour. For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building. 1Cor.3:3-9

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. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 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.1:21-25}

Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap. As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things. Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let your hands not be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well.^{Ecd.11:4-}

We must keep weeding—ensure that there is nothing in our life that would hinder God's work

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. 1Pet.3:7

Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of 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, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done. Heb.12:14-17

Stay in harmony with God

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Eph.4:3-6

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore. Ps.103

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh 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.5:4-6

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

19/02/2025

Psalm 125

Video: Mike Petzer 2023 – 50

Questions

Does our spiritual health affect our mental and physical health?

What can we do to stay as healthy as possible?

How should we measure wealth?

What should our attitude be towards money?

Define wisdom

How can we become wise?

Comments

Does our spiritual health affect our mental and physical health?

Yes! We consist of spirit, soul and body—which is what distinguishes us from animals who are only body and soul (personality and emotions) but no spirit (God consciousness).

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

Contrary to the teaching of Mind Science or New Thought Metaphysics, man is not essentially a spirit being—he is not therefore, properly part of the spirit realm. Man is a **spirit-soul-body** being. **Both the physical and the non-physical in components in man combine together to form an integrated unity.** This is contrary to the well-known formula of the faith school, “*Man is a spirit, he has a soul and lives in a physical body*”.

Man is human, not Divine. He is a created being, not the Creator. The image of God in man does not mean that man can create like God. **He possesses no supernatural or superhuman powers of himself.** Any notion that man has inherent supernatural or god-like powers exalts him unduly and exposes him to the influence of deceiving spirits. The Bible teaches that man needs God’s supernatural help and cannot rely on any powers latent within himself. Man is dependent upon God and made for the glory of God. This means his proper role is found only in submission to God, not by seeking to control Him or the world of spirits that God has created. This is totally contrary to the New Age teaching about man that suggests he has infinite potential within his own personality. It is also contrary to all forms of metaphysics that teach man has supernatural capacity within himself.

Our mental (soul) health affects our physical 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.2}

Soul is *psyche*—our will, emotions and intellect. Our will is in our soul. God’s will is in our spirit. God’s Temple is our body and He dwells in our spirit.

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple. 1Cor.3:16-17

But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit... Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your bodies. 1Cor.6:17-20

Praise and thanksgiving are decisions of our will in our soul:

Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits...^{Ps.103:1-2}

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.^{Ps.100:4}

Praise and thanksgiving release God’s will (and the opposite quenches God’s will):

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit.^{1Thes.5:16-19}

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

If we decide that we will not praise God, we have forgotten all His benefits and we will become despondent, miserable, ungrateful etc.

Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits.^{Ps.103:1-3}

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. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendour.^{Is.61:1-3}

But praise and thanksgiving dispels despair and despondency. His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 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 nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins. 2Pet.1:3-9

But spirit is stronger than soul and so we can (and must) make our spirit dominate our soul. We do this by persuading / convincing our soul that God is bigger than our conscience and our circumstance.

This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence [will convince our conscience; shall assure/persuade our hearts before Him]: If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

We live at a time where people accumulate information and think that is truth but facts are not the same as truth. Facts are a collection of information that produce evidence. Truth is how God sees things—truth is evidence seen from the divine perspective.

What can we do to stay as healthy as possible?

Eat from the tree of Life—i.e. staying in fellowship (staying in harmony) with Jesus

Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.^{Rev.2:7}

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.^{Rev.22:1-5}

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.^{Rev.22:14}

Live a life worthy of our high calling

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. And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe. 1Thess.2:11-13

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people 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.1:9-14

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. Phil.1:7-8

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Eph.4:1-6

How should we measure wealth?

By our relationship with God. Too often we think of wealth and prosperity in terms of money but Jesus makes it clear that it is not our physical assets that make us rich but our relationship with God—our spiritual assets:

Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions [life is not measured by how much you own]." And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. 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 my surplus grain. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain 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 whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God." Lk.12:15-21

What should our attitude be towards money?

Good servant but bad master!

For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God's sight. Lk.16:8-15

Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 1Tim.3:2-3

Money is not bad

feast is made for laughter, wine makes life merry, and money is the answer for everything. Eccl.10:19

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, 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. Now about the collection for the Lord's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me. 1Cor.15:58-16:4

It is the love of money that is the root of evil.

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

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

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.6:5-10

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.' So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?' Heb.13:5-6

We cannot buy favour with God through money

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.8:18-23}

Define wisdom

Wisdom is the application of knowledge—what we do with what we know

Unlike money, wisdom will preserve us

Wisdom, like an inheritance, is a good thing and benefits those who see the sun. Wisdom is a shelter as money is a shelter, but the advantage of knowledge is this: Wisdom preserves those who have it. Ecc.7:11-12

There is a difference between this world's wisdom and God's wisdom

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.' Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. 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. Therefore, as it is written: "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord."

*And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human 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 with great fear and 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 human wisdom, but on God's power. **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. 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: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived" — the things God has prepared for those who love him— these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so 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, 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*

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

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.1:18-2:16
Who is like the wise? Who knows the explanation of things? A person's wisdom brightens their face and changes its hard appearance... Whoever obeys his command will come to no harm, and the wise heart will know the proper time and procedure. For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter, though a person may be weighed down by misery... When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe the labour that is done on earth—people getting no sleep day or night— then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all their efforts to search it out, no one can discover its meaning. Even if the wise claim they know, they cannot really comprehend it. Eccl.8:1;5-6;15-17

I also saw under the sun this example of wisdom that greatly impressed me: There was once a small city with only a few people in it. And a powerful king came against it, surrounded it and built huge siege works against it. Now there lived in that city a man poor but wise, and he saved the city by his wisdom. But nobody remembered that poor man. So I said, "Wisdom is better than strength." But the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are no longer heeded. The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouts of a ruler of fools. Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good. Ecc.9:13-18

Words from a wise man's mouth are gracious, but a fool is consumed by his own lips. At the beginning his words are folly; at the end they are wicked madness— and the fool multiplies words. No one knows what is coming—who can tell him what will happen after him? A fool's work wearies him; Eccl.10:12-15

Not only was the Teacher wise, but he also imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs. The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true. The words of the wise are like goads [move people to take action; cattle prods—painful but helpful], their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails—given by one shepherd. Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them. Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body. Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. Eccl.12:9-14

How can we become wise?

By fearing (reverencing) God

Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still; teach the righteous and they will add to their learning. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For through wisdom your days will be many, and years will be added to your life. If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer. Prov.9:9-12

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise. Ps.111:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. Prov.1:7

Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching. For I too was a son to my father, still tender, and cherished by my mother. Then he taught me, and he said to me, "Take hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands, and you will live. Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or turn away from them. Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. Cherish her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honour you. She will give you a garland to grace your head and present you with a glorious crown." Listen, my son, accept what I say, and the years of your life will be many. I instruct you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble. Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life. Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evildoers. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way. For they cannot rest until they do evil; they are robbed of sleep till they make someone stumble. They eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence. The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. Prov.4:1-18

Learn from Creation

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? Prov.6:6-9

“Four things on earth are small, yet they are extremely wise: Ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer; hyraxes are creatures of little power, yet they make their home in the crags; locusts have no king, yet they advance together in ranks; a lizard can be caught with the hand, yet it is found in kings' palaces.

“There are three things that are stately in their stride, four that move with stately bearing: a lion, mighty among beasts, who retreats before nothing; a strutting rooster [or greyhound ; Hebrew girt-of-loins], a he-goat, and a king secure against revolt [a king with his army around him]. Prov.30:24-31

12/02/2025

Psalm 124

Video: Mike Petzer 2023 – 45

Questions

What is an allegory?

How did Adam and Eve deal with their guilt?

How did God deal with Adam and Eve's guilt?

How do we produce fruit?

What sort of fruit should we bear?

Why is it important to agree with God?

Comments

What is an allegory?

An Allegory is a parable or story that illustrates a spiritual truth. It can be a real life story—either history like Sarah and Hagar in Galatians 4, or true to life, such as rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16 or the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 or even a fictional story such as Ezekiel 17.

Both *Allegories* and *Fables* are stories with a moral meaning, but an *allegory* will only feature human characters, while a *fable* may feature animals or other non-human characters. *Parable* is a short story that teaches a moral or spiritual lesson. (Note that these are C21st definitions and when the Bible was written, most words didn't have precise meanings!).

It would be incongruous for Jesus who said that He was the Truth to use an illustration containing falsehood or mythology to explain the Kingdom of God. And so we can accept Jesus' references to historical events and people (including satan), as accurate.

*The word of the LORD came to me: “**Son of man, set forth an allegory and tell it to the Israelites as 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.*

“ ‘He took one of the seedlings of the land and put it in fertile soil. He planted it like a willow by abundant water, and it sprouted and became a low, spreading vine. Its branches turned toward him, but its roots remained under it. So it became a vine and produced branches and put out leafy boughs.

“ ‘But there was another great eagle with powerful wings and full plumage. The vine now sent out its roots toward him from the plot where it was planted and stretched out its branches to him for water. It had been planted in good soil by abundant water so that it would produce branches, bear fruit and become a splendid vine.’

“Say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Will it thrive? Will it not be uprooted and stripped of its fruit so that it withers? All its new growth will wither. It will not take a strong arm or many people to pull it up by the roots. It has been planted, but will it thrive? Will it not wither completely when the east wind strikes it—wither away in the plot where it grew?’ ”

Then the word of the LORD came to me: “Say to this rebellious people, ‘Do you not know what these things mean?’ Say to them: ‘The king of Babylon went to Jerusalem and carried off her king and her nobles, bringing them back with him to Babylon. Then he took a member of the royal family and made a treaty with him, putting him under oath. He also carried away the leading men of the land, so that the kingdom would be brought low, unable to rise again, surviving only by keeping his treaty. But the king rebelled against him by sending his envoys to Egypt to get horses and a large army. Will he succeed? Will he who does such things escape? Will he break the treaty and yet escape?’

“ ‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, he shall die in Babylon, in the land of the king who put him on the throne, whose oath he despised and whose treaty he broke.

Pharaoh with his mighty army and great horde will be of no help to him in war, when ramps are built and siege works erected to destroy many lives. He despised the oath by breaking the covenant. Because he had given his hand in pledge and yet did all these things, he shall not escape.” ‘Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: As surely as I

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live, I will repay him for despising my oath and breaking my covenant. I will spread my net for him, and he will be caught in my snare. I will bring him to Babylon and execute judgment on him there because he was unfaithful to me. All his choice troops will fall by the sword, and the survivors will be scattered to the winds. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken. “*This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will take a shoot from the very top of a cedar and plant it; I will break off a tender sprig from its topmost shoots and plant it on a high and lofty mountain. On the mountain heights of Israel I will plant it; it will produce branches and bear fruit and become a splendid cedar. Birds of every kind will nest in it; they will find shelter in the shade of its branches. All the trees of the forest will know that I the LORD bring down the tall tree and make the low tree grow tall. I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish.*” *I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it.*” Ezekiel 17

Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? 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 according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise.

These things are being taken figuratively [which things are an allegory]: 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, barren woman, you who never bore a child; shout for joy and cry aloud, you who were never in labour; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.” Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise. At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. But what does 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 and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman. Gal.4:21-31

*His disciples asked him what this parable meant. He said, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, “*though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.*” And *“This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. 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.8:9-15*

How did Adam and Eve deal with their guilt?

They tried to hide and then they made coverings

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. 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.” And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” Gen.3:6-11

How did God deal with Adam and Eve's guilt?

God found them and made them a covering:

The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the LORD God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. Gen.3:21-24

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God banished them from the Garden to stop them eating from the Tree of Life until their sins were removed through the death of Jesus. Now, under the New Covenant, we have access to the Tree of Life (the real one not the copy in the Garden) because our sins have been forgiven:

Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. Rev.2:7

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. Rev.22:1-5

“Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.” 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. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll. He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen. Rev.22:12-21

The Tree of Life is Jesus (who is the embodiment of Wisdom)

Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honour. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her; those who hold her fast will be blessed. Prov.3:13-18

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

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and the one who is wise saves lives. Prov.11:30

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life. Prov.11:30

How do we produce fruit?

By abiding in the Vine (another allegory)

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples... You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other. Jn.15:1-17

What sort of fruit should we bear?

We should bear the fruit of the Spirit—that is, have the same character as the Holy Spirit

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 [Legalism is helpless in bringing this about; it only gets in the way.] 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.5:22-26

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. Col.1:9-12

Peace

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.3:17-18

Praise

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

Light/openness

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.5:8-11

Righteousness

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 for 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

Why is it important to agree with God?

God is always right

Let God be true, and every human being a liar. As it is written: “So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge.” Rom.3:4

Woe to those who quarrel with their Maker, Is.45:9

“He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. We are of the earth, and we speak of earthly things, but he has come from heaven and is greater than anyone else. He testifies about what he has seen and heard, but how few believe what he tells them! Anyone who accepts his testimony can affirm that God is true. For he is sent by God. He speaks God's words, for God gives him the Spirit without limit. Jn.3:31-34

Jesus is the Truth

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

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

We can only worship God in spirit and in truth

“Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.” Jn.4:21-24

Our words will condemn or acquit us

For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.” Matt.12:34-37

“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. For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.” Jn.12:47-50

Liars will not enter heaven

But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.” Rev.21:8
But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. Who is the liar? It is whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is the antichrist—denying the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also. As for you, see that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us—eternal life. 1Jn.2:20-25

*This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the * Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. We accept human testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. 1Jn.5:6-12*

05/02/2025

Psalm 123

Video: Mike Petzer 2023 – 40

Questions

What is salvation?

How are we saved?

Why do some people find the Bible difficult to understand?

How can we know what God thinks about something?

What is the Church?

Is it possible to stay both sensible and spiritual?

Comments

What is salvation?

Salvation is being saved or delivered from enemies and harm but especially from sin.

But I trust in you, LORD; I say, “You are my God.” My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me. Ps.31:14

Then he blessed Joseph and said, “May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked faithfully, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, the Angel who has delivered me from all harm—may he bless these boys. Gen.48:15-16

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. 1Tim.1:15

Salvation is what a Saviour does!

David sang to the LORD the words of this song when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. He said: “The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my saviour—from violent men you save me. I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies. 1Sam.22:1-4

“The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn [strength] of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my saviour— from violent people you save me. 2Sam.22:2-3

then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. Jesus is “the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.” Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.” Acts.4:10-12

Salvation is what God does.

And Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, Lk.1:46-47

*And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” Rev.7:10
*In that day they will say, “Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.” Is.25:9**

How are we saved?

We are saved through the resurrection of Jesus:

in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, 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.3:2-22

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 of all people most to be pitied. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 1Cor.15:17-20

We are saved by grace through faith i.e. by God's goodness when we trust Him—He gives it, we receive it.

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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. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Eph.2:8-10

All the makers of idols will be put to shame and disgraced; they will go off into disgrace together. But Israel will be saved by the LORD with an everlasting salvation; you will never be put to shame or disgraced, to ages everlasting. Is.45:16-17

Why do some people find the Bible difficult to understand?

It is not in their own language.

There are now 7,164 known languages spoken by people worldwide, and as of November 2024 the whole Bible has been translated into 756 languages, the New Testament has been translated into an additional 1,726 languages, and smaller portions of the Bible have been translated into 1,274 other languages (Wycliffe Global Alliance). Thus, at least some portions of the Bible have been translated into 3,756 languages (about half of the world's total languages).

They do not have the Holy Spirit

*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.2:9-16*

Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. 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.3:15-16

Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God."^{Matt.22:29}

Even in our own language we need God's help to understand the Scriptures:

Teach me, LORD, the way of your decrees, that I may follow it to the end. Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law and obey it with all my heart. Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight. Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain. Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word. Ps.119:33-37

"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you."

Jn.16:12-15

I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.

1Jn.2:26-27

And we need to the encouragement of others to understand and apply the Scriptures — especially those who are called and trained to teach

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And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. 2Tim.2:2

These are the things you are to teach and insist on. If anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, they are conceited and understand nothing. They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between people of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. But godliness with contentment is great gain. 1Tim.6:2-6

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. 1Tim.5:17

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Now eagerly desire the greater gifts. 1Cor.12:27-31

You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us. Tit.2:1-8

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. Neh.8:7-8

How can we know what God thinks about something?

Read the Bible and compare what others say with what God says in the Scriptures

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

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way... So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter. 2Thess.2:1-15

'He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' 'Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' " 'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' 'He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.' " Lk.16:27-31

Irenaeus (about AD 200—he was taught by Polycarp who was taught by John the apostle)

Heretics boast of their belief-system as perfect in knowledge, but it is found neither in the prophets, nor the Lord Himself nor the apostles. They patch together their views from sources other than the Scriptures. As the proverb says, they endeavour to weave ropes of sand. They also try to adjust the Lord's parables, the prophets sayings, and the apostles' words, to their own odd teachings, doing this with an air of plausibility, so that their system might seem to enjoy some basis. In the process, they ignore the harmony and inter-connectedness of Scripture thus tearing the truth limb from limb and destroying it.

By ripping texts out of context, dressing them up in new meanings, and changing one thing into another, they deceive many by this evil skill of adjusting the Lord's oracles to their own opinions.

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

They behave as though an expert artist had put costly jewels together into a beautiful image of a king, and then someone else had taken the picture to pieces, rearranged the jewels, and produced a shoddy image of a dog or fox and then claimed this was the king's beautiful image made by the expert artist! The deceiver points to the jewels, which the original artist had so wonderfully arranged into the king's image, but which the deceiver has now reshaped into the image of a dog. By pointing to the jewels, he deludes the ignorant who have no idea what a king looks like, convincing them that this pathetic picture of a fox is the image of the beautiful king! Likewise, these heretics stitch together myths and fables, and then by violently twisting Scripture's words, phrases, and parables, they try to adjust the oracles of God to their own fabricated fictions.

What is the Church?

The gathering of Believers

The Church is not a building but the Family of God, the meeting together of fellow Believers. The word “*Church*” in the NT is the Greek word “*ekklesia*” (ἐκκλησία) from where we get “*ecclesiastical*” and is defined as: “*a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place for the purpose of deliberating*” (to deliberate means to discourse or debate with action taken after careful consideration).

Is it possible to stay both sensible and spiritual?

Yes!

We should pray with spirit and soul (mind)

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Eph.6:16-18

Now, brothers and sisters, 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 pipe 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 the speaker is a foreigner to me. So it is with you. Since you are eager for gifts of the Spirit, try to excel in those that build up the church. For this reason the one who speaks in a tongue should pray that they may interpret what they say. 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 understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding. Otherwise when you are praising God in the Spirit, how can someone else, who is now put in the position of an inquirer, say “Amen” to your thanksgiving, since they do not know what you are saying? You are giving thanks well enough, but no one else is edified. 1Cor.14:6-17

Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the portico of the temple, its buildings, its storerooms, its upper parts, its inner rooms and the place of atonement. He gave him the plans of all that the Spirit had put in his mind for the courts of the temple of the LORD and all the surrounding rooms, for the treasuries of the temple of God and for the treasuries for the dedicated things. 1Chron.28:11-12

“I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me. I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this. “So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: Dan.7:15-16

29/01/2025

Psalm 122

Video: Mike Petzer 2023 – 35

Questions

- What do we mean by “the Word of God”?
- Why do we believe that the Bible is the Word of God?
- How can we understand what the Bible means?
- Is the Bible the only way God communicates with us?
- Does it matter which translation of the Bible we use?
- How is God’s Word our spiritual food?
- Why must we serve (worship) only God?
- Why mustn’t we test God?

Comments

What do we mean by “the Word of God”?

The Word of God is Jesus

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.11-2

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. “He will rule them with an iron sceptre.” He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Rev.19:11-26

Jesus is also called the Word of Life

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. 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. We write this to make our joy complete. 1Jn.1:1-4

Word in Greek is λόγος (logos) and means *intelligence, word as the expression of that intelligence, the embodiment of an idea*. And so it applies to Jesus who is the embodiment of God:

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

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. Col.1:15

God is Spirit and so He cannot be seen. And so when God is seen, it is the embodiment of the invisible God—Jesus the Word of God

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

In the OT when God was seen, we call it a “Christophany” (or “Theophany”) — an appearance of Christ (or God) *c.f.* Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Gideon, Samson’s parents, the 4th man in the fire, *etc.*

Why do we believe that the Bible is the Word of God?

The Bible (Scripture) (OT and NT) is called the “Word of God” because it God’s communication to us of Jesus.

“Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar. Prov.30:5-6

One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, Lk.5:1

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"And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,' he is not to 'honour his father' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. Matt.15:3-6

So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Acts.6:2

Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. 2Cor.4:2

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}

Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith... He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. Rom.3:7-8;14

How can we understand what the Bible means?

God inspired and authored the Bible directly through the Holy Spirit

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2Pet.1:20-21

"Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus— he was one of our number and shared in this ministry." Acts.1:16-17

And so God must give us revelation to understand the Bible—which Jesus did when He was on the earth and now the Holy Spirit does.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. 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?" ...He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. Lk.24:27-45

Be good to your servant while I live, that I may obey your word. Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law. Ps.119:17-18

The Bible is not difficult to understand when we have the Holy Spirit to give us spiritual insight, but those without the Holy Spirit cannot understand the spiritual part of it

However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived"— the things God has prepared for those who love him— these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so 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, 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

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judgments, for, "Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ. 1Cor.2:9-16

Is the Bible the only way God communicates with us?

No! God speaks through various ways including creation, circumstances, sickness, hardship, dreams, prophesy, conversations,

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 people are without excuse. Rom.1:19-20

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. Ps.19:1-4

And the heavens proclaim his righteousness, for he is a God of justice. Ps.50:6

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.33:14-22

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: 'Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! 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. I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' Acts.2:14-21

However, since the New Covenant, God always speaks through Jesus—i.e. in harmony with what Jesus said and taught as recorded in 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. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. Heb.1:1-3

Does it matter which translation of the Bible we use?

Jesus is the incarnate Word of God not the Bible. The Bible is God's record of the Word of God, inspired and authored by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit's life and power in the communication of God's Word not in the physical words of the text. That is why we need to understand what is written—both mentally and spiritually!

Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth." The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. Acts.8:30-34

all the people came together as one in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the teacher of the Law to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded for Israel. So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

*in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law. Ezra the teacher of the Law stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion. Beside him on his right stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiyah and Maaseiah; and on his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam. Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan and Pelaiah—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.8:1-12*

There are no original manuscripts of the Scriptures and so we only have copies of copies which have to be translated into our language. Language changes about every 40 years and so the translations are constantly reviewed.

The NT was written in

The oldest New Testament fragment (from John 18) that we have today is the Ryland Papyrus P52, (dated from A.D. 100-150) currently on display at the John Rylands University Library in Manchester, UK. It was purchased in 1920 by Bernard Grenfell on the Egyptian antiquities market. However, it wasn't really "discovered" until 1934 when it was translated by C. H. Roberts. It comes from a codex (ie. book form, not a scroll) and contains parts of seven lines from the John 18:31–33 on the front, and parts of seven lines from verses 37–38 on the back. (N.B. it is written in Cursive Greek which has no punctuation, sentences or paragraphs!)

Front

ΟΙ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΟΙ ΗΜΙΝ ΟΥΚ ΕΞΕΣΤΙΝ ΑΠΟΚΤΕΙΝΑΙ ΟΥΔΕΝΑ ΙΝΑ Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΠΛΗΡΩΘΗ ΟΝ ΕΙΠΕΝ ΣΗΜΑΙΝΩΝ ΠΟΙΩ ΘΑΝΑΤΩ ΗΜΕΛΛΕΝ ΑΠΟΘΝΗΣΚΕΙΝ ΕΙΣΗΛΘΕΝ ΟΥΝ ΠΑΛΙΝ ΕΙΣ ΤΟ ΠΡΑΙΤΩΡΙΟΝ Ο ΠΙΛΑΤΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΦΩΝΗΣΕΝ ΤΟΝ ΙΗΣΟΥΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΙΠΕΝ ΑΥΤΩ ΣΥ ΕΙ Ο ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΤΩΝ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΩΝ

the Jews, "For us it is not permitted to kill anyone," so that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spoke signifying what kind of death he was going to die. Entered therefore again into the Praetorium Pilate and summoned Jesus and said to him, "Thou art king of the Jews?"

Back

ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΕΙΜΙ ΕΓΩ ΕΙΣ ΤΟΥΤΟ ΓΕΓΕΝΝΗΜΑΙ ΚΑΙ (ΕΙΣ ΤΟΥΤΟ) ΕΛΗΛΥΘΑ ΕΙΣ ΤΟΝ ΚΟΣΜΟΝ ΙΝΑ ΜΑΡΤΥΡΗΣΩ ΤΗ ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑ ΠΑΣ Ο ΩΝ ΕΚ ΤΗΣ ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑΣ ΑΚΟΥΕΙ ΜΟΥ ΤΗΣ ΦΩΝΗΣ ΛΕΓΕΙ ΑΥΤΩ Ο ΠΙΛΑΤΟΣ ΤΙ ΕΣΤΙΝ ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥΤΟ ΕΙΠΩΝ ΠΑΛΙΝ ΕΞΗΛΘΕΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΟΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΛΕΓΕΙ ΑΥΤΟΙΣ ΕΓΩ ΟΥΔΕΜΙΑΝ ΕΥΡΙΣΚΩ ΕΝ ΑΥΤΩ ΑΙΤΙΑΝ

a King I am. For this I have been born and (for this) I have come into the world so that I would testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears of me my voice." Said to him Pilate, "What is truth?" and this having said, again he went out unto the Jews and said to them, "I find not one fault in him."



How is God's Word 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

God's Word (the Scriptures in our heart) feeds our spirit, like bread and honey feeds our body

Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, 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 the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." "Sir," they said, "always give us this bread." Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. Jn.6:32-35

Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever." Jn.6:53-58

I have not departed from your laws, for you yourself have taught me. How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Ps.119:102-103

Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. Prov.16:24

God's Word will strengthen and nourish our whole person:

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 peace and prosperity. Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart... This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones^{Prov.3:1-8}

My son, pay attention to my words. Open your ears to what I say. Do not lose sight of these things. Keep them deep within your heart because they are life to those who find them and they heal the whole body. Guard your heart more than anything else, because the source of your life flows from it.^{Prov.4:20-23}

Why must we serve (worship) only God?

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only. [Deut.6:13]'"

The Lord is the only true God

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

All other "deities" or "gods" are deceptions and we need to follow the Truth

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.^{Eph.4:4-6}

We know that "An idol is nothing at all in the world" and that "There is no God but one." For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.^{1Cor.8:4-6}

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half of it east to the Dead Sea and half of it west to the Mediterranean Sea, in summer and in winter. The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name. ^{Zech.14:8-9}

Why mustn't we test God?

Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test. [Deut.6:16]'"

Faith is trusting not testing and God will always keep His Word—but in the way He chooses not in necessarily in the way we want.

The LORD said to me: "What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him. I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name. But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, is to be put to death." You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously, so do not be alarmed. Deut.18:17-22

Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God." When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him. About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?" "Yes," she said, "that is the price." Peter said to her, "How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also." Acts.5:3-9

Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses." The apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are." Acts.15:5-11

The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. So they quarrelled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?" But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?" Ex.17:1-3

22/01/2025

Psalm 121

Video: Mike Petzer 2023 – 30

Questions

Why is religion common to all of humanity?

What makes Christianity unique amongst all religions?

What is repentance?

Why is repentance integral to true religion?

What was John the Baptist's mission?

Why was John the Baptist the last of the Old Covenant prophets?

Comments

Why is religion common to all of humanity?

Religion is the worship of a deity and we are spiritual beings

Into your hands I commit my spirit; deliver me, LORD, my faithful God. Ps.31:5

Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD, my soul. I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings, who cannot save. When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing. Ps.146:1-4

We are created in God's image

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.26-28

We were created to worship/serve God

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being. ^{Rev.4:11}

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work [serve or worship] and take care of it. ^{Gen.2:15}

What makes Christianity unique amongst all religions?

Jesus—His deity, His humanity, His conception, His life, His death, His resurrection, His ascension. All religions except Christianity are based on works—what we do—but true Christianity is about what Christ has done for us. No other religion except Christianity has any factual evidence to verify their claims but Christianity is based on the fact of Jesus' resurrection—that He died and rose from the grave. The evidence of Jesus' resurrection was verified by hundreds of people who actually witnessed the risen Jesus plus millions of people since who have affirmed that Jesus has changed their lives by making peace between them and God

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

*For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance *: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, * and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born... But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 1Cor.15:1-8;20*

What is repentance?

Change of mind—which leads to change of attitude, change of thinking, change of conversation, change of expectations, change of lifestyle

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.

Forgiveness is unconditional (because it is by grace); Restoration is conditional on repentance. which involves at least a determination to change Forgiveness is a clean slate; restoration is keeping the slate clean. Forgiveness is mending what was broken; Restoration is making it work again.

Your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.^{2Cor.7:9-10}

Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come, but woe to anyone through whom they come. It would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around their neck than to cause one of these little ones to stumble. So watch yourselves. If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them." The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"^{Lk.17:1-5}

Why is repentance integral to true religion?

Repentance is the doorway to faith and forgiveness of sins which leads to salvation

Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God "will repay each person according to what they have done." To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honour and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favouritism.^{Rom.2:4-11}

Repentance must be genuine

prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God.^{Lk.3:8}

What was John the Baptist's mission?

Prepare the way for Jesus and the Kingdom of God

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'^{Matt.3:1-3}

He also declared that Jesus was the Sacrificial Lamb who would take away the sins of the world:

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! He is the one I was talking about when I said, 'A man is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.' I did not recognize him as the Messiah, but I have been baptizing with water so that he might be revealed to Israel."^{Jn.1:29-31}

Why was John the Baptist the last of the Old Covenant prophets?

Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, and violent people have been raiding it. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. Whoever has ears, let them hear.^{Matt.11:11-15}

Because the New Covenant began with Jesus

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John was the greatest of the Old Covenant prophets because he was the one who heralded in the Messiah—he actually met Jesus instead of seeing Him in the distant future like the other OT prophets

Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”Jn.8:56

But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it. Matt.13:13-17

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things. 1Pet.1:10-12

For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them.” Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him. Jn.12:39-41

15/01/2025

Psalm 120

Video: Mike Petzer 2023 – 25

Questions

Should there be differences in the Church?

Can we be different without being divisive?

Why is Jesus referred to as a “stone” or a “rock”?

How did Simeon recognise the Baby Jesus as the Messiah?

How does Jesus cause people to fall and rise?

Comments

Should there be differences in the Church?

Yes! We need to keep the Faith and teach sound doctrine!

Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers. 1Tim.4:16

[Elders] 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. Titus 1:9

You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine. Titus 2:1

We should contend for the faith—which means that we must oppose unbelief and bad doctrine.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. 2Tim.4:7

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. For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord. Though you already know all this, I want to remind you Jude.3-5

Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth explaining that sometimes there must be divisions:

But in the following instructions, I cannot praise you. For it sounds as if more harm than good is done when you meet together. First, I hear that there are divisions among you when you meet as a church, and to some extent I believe it. But, of course, there must be divisions among you so that you who have God's approval will be recognized! When you meet together, you are not really interested in the Lord's Supper. For some of you hurry to eat your own meal without sharing with others. As a result, some go hungry while others get drunk. What? Don't you have your own homes for eating and drinking? Or do you really want to disgrace God's church and shame the poor? What am I supposed to say? Do you want me to praise you? Well, I certainly will not praise you for this!^{1Cor.11:17-22}

The analogy of the Body being the Church shows that we each have different callings, giftings and functions

There is one body. But it has many parts. Even though it has many parts, they make up one body. It is the same with Christ. We were all baptized by one Holy Spirit into one body. It didn't matter whether we were Jews or Greeks, slaves or free people. We were all given the same Spirit to drink. The body is not made up of just one part. It has many parts. Suppose the foot says, “I am not a hand. So I don't belong to the body.” It is still part of the body. And suppose the ear says, “I am not an eye. So I don't belong to the body.” It is still part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, how could it hear? If the whole body were an ear, how could it smell? God has placed each part in the body just as he wanted it to be. If all the parts were the same, how could there be a body? As it is, there are many parts. But there is only one body. The eye can't say to the hand, “I don't need you!” The head can't say to the feet, “I don't need you!” In fact, it is just the opposite. The parts of the body that seem to be weaker are the ones we can't do without. The parts that we think are less important we treat with special honour. The private parts aren't shown. But they are treated with special care. The parts that can be shown don't need special care. But God has joined together all the parts of the body. And he has given more honour to the parts that didn't have any. In that way, the parts of the body will not take sides. All of them will take care of each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it. If

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

one part is honoured, every part shares in its joy. You are the body of Christ. Each one of you is a part of it. 1Cor.12:12-27

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. Rom.12:3-8

But we only have partial knowledge this side of glory

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness 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. 1Cor.13:8-12

Because we are one Body, should live in harmony with others in the Body—under the headship of Jesus

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. Rom.12:14-19

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.3:15-17

Can we be different without being divisive?

Yes—on some things! Every generation faces new expressions of old heresies but we should never compromise on the doctrines contained in the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed—they are non-negotiable.

I urge you to keep in your hands the Creed drawn up by the fathers at the Council of Nicaea. Champion it fervently, with confidence in the Lord. Set an example to your brothers and sisters everywhere. Show them that the conflict in which we are engaged is one of defending Truth against heresy, and that the adversary has various tricks. *Athenaenus*

We can disagree about other doctrines but should not let them become divisive, however, we should stand firm on moral issues. And as with all matters, we should ensure that we are actually interpreting the Word of God correctly and not seeing issues through our tradition or culture—exegesis not eisegesis!

Before Jesus' Resurrection the Disciples had disputes

Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, "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. "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, strengthen your brothers." Lk.22:24-32*

Paul and Barnabas had disputes with others

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

Paul and Barnabas also had disputes with each other.

Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. Acts.15:36-41

Paul and Barnabas' dispute was eventually resolved (There is no comment on who was right or wrong in this division!)

Do your best to come to me quickly, for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. 2Tim.4:9-11

The Biblical way of resolving disputes is to bring it to the Church

If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people? Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church? I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? But instead, one brother takes another to court—and this in front of unbelievers! The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters. 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. "I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but I will not be mastered by anything. You say, "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both." The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 2Cor.6:1-13

By dishonouring other Believers, we dishonour Jesus Himself. Some of the people were behaving selfishly and ignoring the other members of the Church—which is Christ's Body.

We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.¹Jn.4:19-21

The Master, Jesus, on the night of his betrayal, took bread. Having given thanks, he broke it and said, This is my body, broken for you. Do this to remember me. After supper, he did the same thing with the cup: This cup is my blood, my new covenant with you. Each time you drink this cup, remember me. What you must solemnly realize is that every time you eat this bread and every time you drink this cup, you re-enact in your words and actions the death of the Master. You will be drawn back to this meal again and again until the Master returns. You must never let familiarity breed contempt. If you give no thought (or worse, don't care) about the broken body of the Master when you eat and drink, you're running the risk of serious consequences. That's why so many of you even now are listless and sick, and others have gone to an early grave. If we get this straight now, we won't have to be straightened out later on. Better to be confronted by the Master now than to face a fiery confrontation later. So, my friends, when you come together to the Lord's Table, be reverent and courteous with one another. If you're so hungry that you can't wait to be served, go home

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

and get a sandwich. But by no means risk turning this Meal into an eating and drinking binge or a family squabble. It is a spiritual meal—a love feast. ^{1Cor.11:23-34}

Why is Jesus referred to as a “stone” or a “rock”?

The OT was written to explain God’s plan of salvation that would be revealed in the NT and fulfilled through Jesus. This every illustration or analogy of Jesus was to show a facet or aspect of Him and our salvation. Each illustration is only a partial explanation of the whole story of salvation.

Stone

The Temple and the Altar was built with stone not with man-made bricks (like the Egypt buildings) This signifies the deity of Jesus (and also that it is what God does that counts, not what we do).

God has made Jesus the most important part of the building, even though people rejected Him

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. 1Pet.2:1-8

Rock

Jesus is a place of refuge

For I proclaim the name of the LORD: Ascribe greatness to our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He. Deut.32:3-4

The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be my God, the Rock, my Saviour! 2Sam.22:7

But the LORD has become my fortress, and my God the rock in whom I take refuge. Ps.94:22

Jesus is the source of water (the Holy Spirit)

I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.” So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. Ex.17:6

They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. 1Cor.10:2-4

*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

Jesus is the place of glory

Then the LORD said, “There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.” Ex.21:31-33

How did Simeon recognise the Baby Jesus as the Messiah?

By the Holy Spirit

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.” Lk.2:25-32

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How does Jesus cause people to fall and rise?

We are already fallen sinners and spiritually dead and we recognise our fallenness by Jesus' holiness but **we rise through Jesus' resurrection**—anastasis

"This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. Lk.2:34

To some Jesus is the aroma of life and is precious but to others, Jesus is the aroma of death—He has become offensive.

In Christ, God leads us from place to place in one perpetual victory parade. Through us, he brings knowledge of Christ. Everywhere we go, people breathe in the exquisite fragrance. Because of Christ, we give off a sweet scent rising to God, which is recognized by those on the way of salvation—an aroma redolent with life. But those on the way to destruction treat us more like the stench from a rotting corpse. This is a terrific responsibility. Is anyone competent to take it on?^{2Cor.2:14-16}

For us, Jesus is the highest authority and His Name is above all names; it is like anointment poured forth; it is like honey from the comb. But for many other people, Jesus is just a swear word and instead of being the Way, He gets in the way; instead of being a Rock in which to take refuge, He is a stumbling stone over which they trip.

Christ is the living Stone. People did not accept him. But God chose him. God places the highest value on him. You also are like living stones. As you come to him you are being built into a house for worship. There you will be holy priests. You will offer spiritual sacrifices. God will accept them because of what Jesus Christ has done. In Scripture it says, "Look! I am placing a stone in Zion. It is a chosen and very valuable stone. It is the most important stone in the building. The one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." The stone is very precious to you who believe. But to people who do not believe, "The stone the builders did not accept has become the most important stone of all." And, "It is a stone that causes people to trip. It is a rock that makes them fall." They trip and fall because they do not obey the message. That is also what God planned for them. But God chose you to be his people. You are royal priests. You are a holy nation. You are a people who belong to God. All of this is so that you can sing his praises. He brought 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}

8/01/2025

Psalm 119:169-176

Video: Mike Petzer 2023 – 19.30

Questions

Why is the Holy Spirit the “*Vicar of Christ*”?

How do we deputise for Jesus Christ?

Why is it important to properly understand the basic doctrines of Christianity?

Does it matter what we believe about the bread and wine of Communion?

What is a “*sacrament*”?

How do we receive spiritual benefit or grace?

Comments

Why is the Holy Spirit the “*Vicar of Christ*”?

Jesus is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father:

But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God. ^{Lk.22:69}

Jesus is no longer physically on the earth but when He ascended to heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.” (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) 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.4:7-14

And so the Holy Spirit is Jesus’ “*deputy*” or representative on earth.

But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.” Jn.16:7-15

However, unlike Jesus who could only be in one place at a time, the Holy Spirit is not restricted by physical limitations—and the Holy Spirit dwells in us, not just with us.

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. Jn.14:15-18

All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. Jn.14:25-27

How do we deputise for Jesus Christ?

Every genuine Christian is a follower of Christ and acts as His agent or “*deputy*”.

Then Jesus came to them and said, “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,

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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

This makes every Believer a “vicar” of Christ because we are Jesus’ representatives in the world.

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.”^{1Jn.8:31-32}

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.^{1Jn.15:7-8}

Christians represent Christ to the world!

Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus.^{1Jn.4:16-17}

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.^{1Cor.11:1}

Why is it important to properly understand the basic doctrines of Christianity?

This side of Glory we only have partial understanding (even though we know more now than when we first believed)

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness 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.^{1Cor.13:8-12}

However, we should at least aspire to maturity and we have a duty ensure that we are not deceived—especially as God has given us everything we need for a godly life

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; ^{2Pet.1:3-5}

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work^{2Tim.3:16-17}

And in any case, good theology makes Christianity easy whereas poor theology makes Christianity hard!

We should make every effort to keep the Faith!

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. For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord. Though you already know all this, I want to remind you ^{Jude.3-5}

But you, men of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ^{1Tim.6:11-12}

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. ^{2Tim.4:7}

Athanasius the Great (296-373) I urge you to keep in your hands the Creed drawn up by the fathers at the Council of Nicaea. Champion it fervently, with confidence in the Lord. Set an example to your brothers and sisters everywhere. Show them that the conflict in which we are engaged is one of defending Truth against heresy, and that the adversary has various tricks. What makes a martyr isn't just refusing to burn incense to idols, but refusing to deny the faith: this, too, is a glorious proof of the soul's integrity. Scripture condemns as outcasts not only those who turned away to idols, but also those who betrayed the truth. Judas was ejected from apostleship, not because he offered sacrifice

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to idols, but because he was disloyal to Christ. Hymenaeus and Alexander fell away, not by worshipping idols, but because they "*made shipwreck of the faith*" (1Tim.1:19). Conversely, the patriarch Abraham obtained the crown, not because he suffered a martyr's death, but because he was faithful to God. The other saints of whom Paul speaks — Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the rest — weren't perfected by shedding their blood; it was by their faith they were justified. To this day we admire them, since they were at least prepared to die for their devotion to the Lord. To add an example from our own history, think how the blessed Alexander (*Bishop of Alexandria prior to Athanasius, dying in 328*) fought to the death against the Arian heresy; though he was an old man, what great hardships and toils he bore, until extreme age gathered him to his fathers. Many others have laboured heavily in refuting this ungodliness, and now enjoy in Christ the wonderful reward of their faith! Let's consider that everything is staked on this conflict, and that the choice before us now is to deny or maintain the faith

Athanasius, fourth-century Bishop of Alexandria, is abidingly famous for his lifelong and costly defence of the Deity of Christ against "*Arianism*" which reduced Christ to nothing more than the first and greatest of God's creations. To this denial of Christ, the opposition was led for forty-five long and bitter years by Athanasius, both doctrinally and by virtue of his gifted qualities of leadership. For this, he was sent into exile by hostile Emperors no fewer than five times. Athanasius spent seventeen years away from his beloved Alexandria, hiding sometimes from search-parties of imperial troops, for years at a stretch, in the trackless wastes of the Egyptian desert. Sometimes the opposition got so strong an upper hand in Church and state that it seemed Athanasius was virtually alone: hence the Latin tag *Athanasius contra mundum* (Athanasius against the world). He never really stood alone, but he did unflinchingly spearhead a demoralised orthodoxy in its darkest days, when even popes of Rome crumpled in compromise. By also, later on, arguing for the full Deity of the Holy Spirit, Athanasius paved the way for the Cappadocian Fathers' complete expression of Trinitarian theology

Does it matter what we believe about the bread and wine of Communion?

Yes because we worship in spirit and truth—we can't worship in a lie!

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth. Jn.4:24-25

Jesus was crucified only once and so think that the bread and wine is His literal body and blood and then to offer this on a "altar" is to re-crucify Him.

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. Rom.6:8-10

It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. Heb.9:23-28

Moses couldn't enter the Promised land because he broke the symbolism of Jesus dying only once:

The LORD answered Moses, "Go out in front of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

*of Israel. And he called the place Massah * and Meribah because the Israelites quarrelled and because they tested the LORD saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?" Ex.17:5-7*

The LORD said to Moses, "Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink." So Moses took the staff from the LORD's presence, just as he commanded him. He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, "Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank. But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honour me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them." Nu.20:7-12

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. 1Cor.10:1-6

On that same day the LORD told Moses, "Go up into the Abarim Range to Mount Nebo in Moab, across from Jericho, and view Canaan, the land I am giving the Israelites as their own possession. There on the mountain that you have climbed you will die and be gathered to your people, just as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people. This is because both of you broke faith with me in the presence of the Israelites at the waters of Meribah Kadesh in the Desert of Zin and because you did not uphold my holiness among the Israelites. Therefore, you will see the land only from a distance; you will not enter the land I am giving to the people of Israel." Deut.32:48-52

What is a "sacrament"?

A "sacrament" is something physical that imparts spiritual benefit to its recipients. That is why we call the bread and wine "emblems" and communion and baptism "ordinances" instead of "sacraments" Communion is accepted widely as a 'sacrament' and a 'means of grace', even in many evangelical churches but for me as a Pentecostal the whole subject takes on a deeper richness. The phrase 'a means of grace' is a common and easy phrase. But it is a weevil word corrupting beliefs.

Grace was the centre of theology until the Pentecostals showed the work of God was by the Holy Spirit, not by any other emanation or force. The 'means of grace' meant ways to accumulated grace sufficient to give souls access to heaven, that is by religious acts, fasting, prayers and so on. Taking communion was particularly a good 'sacrament' a meritorious physical act conferring automatic effects.

Pentecostal thought, as I have known it for a lifetime, is that no physical act has any reward without the operation of faith. Salvation is by faith, not by any act, but faith must act to bring salvation. Bread and wine were important in Scripture from the day when Melchizedek the priest of Jerusalem brought bread and wine to Abraham, confirming God's promise of the land to Abraham. As a tent dweller he could farm neither bread nor wine. However, so much for that. I would like to make bread and wine more meaningful. **Jesus is present, though not IN the emblems, but with us**, where two or three gather in His name. We partake physically with faith, and benefit physically and spiritually.

When Jesus instituted this ordinance He was alive, and the disciples could not 'eat' Him or drink His blood. But communion is far more than a remembrance of Christ as Zwingli said. We partake of physical elements by faith and receive the physical and spiritual realities of Christ. The act is important. It is as close as anything could come to signify the physical realities of the Gospel. It is a truly Pentecostal act, our bodies receiving as well as our spirit.

Deal Pentecostal Church Bible Studies 2025

At the Lord's Table, I open myself completely in surrender to God. I don't just eat, thinking that in some way it will do me good, any more than just the act of listening to sermons has any sacramental and automatic effect. I admit that listening to some sermons has been a trial of spiritual character, but merely hearing adds nothing to my heavenly grace banking account. Any religious rite must be joined with a conscious faith act.

It is precisely to ensure that we do draw near for physical and spiritual blessings that Jesus told us to do this, partake of bread and wine. As I eat, my eating becomes an act of my spirit to reach out to Jesus. Eating bread is so natural and simple, a child can eat. That is what it means, come simply, naturally to God who feeds us on the bread of heaven as we open our mouths and open our souls consciously to Him. I don't come merely for a new cleansing. I am cleansed already or I dare not come at all.

Some eat thoughtlessly assuming that the bread is holy and in a mysterious way they imbibe God. One of my church members would not let the birds eat the remaining crumbs from the communion table, but always ate it herself – with milk. But God is not to be manipulated automatically and helplessly by a piece of bread, Paul says Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, not by ritual. I myself think of Him as coming and coming as the everlastingly coming One, flooding my soul in a never ending stream of life. "Moment by moment I've life from above", that wonderful hymn says.

How do we receive spiritual benefit or grace?

The only real “sacrament” is that simple yet profound trust in God and His Son Jesus Christ — faith:

The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.^{Gal.5:6}

No one can please God without faith. Whoever goes to God must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who seek him.^{Heb.11:6}

Faith imparts salvation, both the salvation from the eternal consequences of sin (life eternal) and also the salvation from the present consequences of sin (life enjoyable).

God's grace has saved you because of your faith in Christ. Your salvation doesn't come from anything you do. It is God's gift. It is not based on anything you have done. No one can boast about earning it. God made us. He created us to belong to Christ Jesus. Now we can do good things. Long ago God prepared them for us to do.^{Eph.2:8-10}

We belong with those who have faith and are saved.^{Heb.10:39}

From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures. They have the power to give you wisdom so that you can be saved through faith in Christ Jesus.^{2Tim.3:15}